UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

ועידת התביעות
Claims Conference
Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany

Claims Conference Holocaust Survivor Memoir Collection

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NIGHT

DAWN

DAY

NOW ON THE THRESHOLD OF A
NEW CENTURY IS ONLY HAPPINESS

William B. Nesbitt

INTRODUCTION

I am privileged to introduce this fascinating memoirs by Canton Nussen. What an extraordinary life! All personal memoirs are unique, but this account is particularly poignant and meaningful. It offers the reader, whether family or friend, a window to that rich and vibrant world of Hungarian Jewry before the war. these memoirs bear witness to the difficult period in Yugoslavia during the Holocaust, a story never before fully told. The loss and suffering during the Holocaust, and the difficulties of readjusting after the war, are movingly described. Cantor Nussen tells us not only how he survived, but also how he excelled in Sweden and the United States using his many skills: operatic, dental, and personal!

It is a very personal story, but also a very Jewish story--one that is now being passed down to the future generations. As a historian of Jewish history, I am also delighted that Cantor Nussen sees this version as the beginning. This present booklet was quickly prepared for the Nussen family's happy gathering on Daniel's Bar Mitzvah. An expanded version will be published, it is hoped, as a book. There is a wide public that can learn and be inspired by this story, and we are fortunate that it will be preserved.

Professor Daniel J. Schroeter
Teller Family Chair in Jewish History
University of California, Irvine

December 16, 1996/6 Tevet 5757

DEUTSCHE BUNDESBANK

Deutsche Bundesbank · D-60263 Frankfurt am Main

Mr. William B. Nussen
144 A Avenida Majorca
Laguna Hills CA 92653
USA

Ihr Zeichen, Ihre Nachricht vom Your ref.	Bitte in der Antwort angeben Please quote	Telefon/Name Telephone/Name	Datum Date
05.03.1998	Z 12/Vo140598 Gerd-W. Voß	(0 69) 95 66 - 32 23	14 May 1998

Pension payment for the month of April 1998
by order of Amt für Wiedergutmachung, Saarburg
Ref.-No. 0085159-45

Dear Mr. Nussen,

By your letter you informed us, that you did not receive the check for the month of April. Our records indicate, that on April 1, 1998 the check no. 79402 for US$ 401,03 was issued by Citibank New York and sent to your above address. This check has not yet been payed and we have therefore on May 12, 1998 asked Citibank for stop payment of it.

After confirmation of stoppage we will request Citibank to send you a replacement check. We hope that you will receive this check in the next few days.

As you furthermore mentioned you are finishing a book about the reason why the german government is sending checks to you. We are interested in this book and would appreciate it, if you could send us a few pages or an extract of it as offered by you.

Very truly yours
DEUTSCHE BUNDESBANK
Friederich Mitalik

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Part 1

The War Years

CHAPTER 1: THE HOLOCAUST YEARS

The Holocaust Chronology, from 1933 to 1945, is among civilized humanity's most shameful and darkest history!

When the German revolution was coming to power, poverty was a worldwide epidemic. It became the German policy that someone should be blamed for the poor social state they were in. The finger pointed in our direction. Jews were, for the most part, unrelenting workers. Some of us chiseled out a piece from the small stone of financial solidarity at that time, and it became the German belief that we were lowering their standard of living. It was as if they believed there was only so much opportunity awaiting the many stalwart members of the working class, and we were taking more than our fair share. So the Nazis waged war against us, a race of people whose main motto in life is as simple and yet hard to understand as our way of life: "Shalom." Peace. That simplicity left us an easy target for attack. An innocuous people. We suddenly found ourselves taking more than our fair share of tragedy. I am but one story teller, but no matter how many times the story is retold, the message remains the same. The price for ignorance is the recapitulation of tragedy. The story must be retold again and again lest it be forgotten and relived.

In the year after I returned from the soul-cleansing visit with my parents in Satmar, the forefront of the Holocaust would rear its head in Hungary. More and more, Transylvanian Jews found their hometowns suddenly occupied by jackbooted Germans, row after row, each replete with pistols, machine guns, bayonets, and every killing machine known to man. Without any form of retaliation, most villages had to offer immediate surrender, at which point they were taken prisoner, as of yet no one knew where. Amid the confusion, the front pages of every major newspaper began to read:

"All well-educated young people, twenty to twenty-one years of age, preferably professionals such as engineers, dentists, and pharmacists, are needed immediately for work in their respective positions in Bor, Yugoslavia."

There were gold and copper mines in this area, which as of yet were untapped natural resources. The German government had signed a pact with the Hungarian government that not only would the 3000 men needed for this job be given the same rights as German citizens and receive first class food and adequate living quarters, but the Hungarian government would receive a percentage of the revenue from the materials produced. It seemed to be the only sure way to avoid the brunt of their lives.

Before going to bor, our 3,000 were on temporary basis divided in two villages called "Pahi and Seged". I remembered well it was on my birthday, time; July 1943. Our Lieutenant, full of gold medal chested that was a little older than us, handed me his luggage after most of our group were divided in peasant houses. Everybody seemed to be very happy including the peasant families. The peasants seemed to have been notified in advance. Then he turned to me to follow him and a local farmer. It was late in the night. When I woke up in the morning from a mattress bed alone in the room but I heard my boss snoring from another room.

When I walked outside it was an incredible sight:

Everything fresh green grass, a wooden bench located in a beautiful spot, a few plum trees. No matter in which direction you looked, the sight was beautiful. I woke up the Lieutenant.

We could not see another house or any person when the sun started to come up in our direction. Every day at the same time you could hear the sound in the afternoon cow bells peaceful sound and two cows in the front leading the rest of them. We lived in an empty small four room school. My job was to keep his boots and shoes polished. We ate breakfast inside and joined the group cooking in the village. Each house had a list in the front with the names of the inhabitants. Morning and evening, military marching and conditioning like we learned with strenuous exercise and training and walking with heavy loads on our back singing new songs and count down of those present. I remember telling my superior, the Lieutenant that the place we live, heaven can not be nicer than this place.

Came from "Seged" and as well from "Pahi" to me. My boss Lieutenant suggested that I should do preliminary work in their houses and my lab. Work in our school in a room for myself. It worked out very well, no problem at all. Until one of our young men running into me while I was working on a patient and very excitingly shouting that a high ranking officer arrived at "Pahi". He wants the names according to the names posted on the quarters. Names called out loud to see if anyone is missing and right away and that my boss Lieutenant is very nervous and that he should tell me how I should tell where I come from which place I was visiting.

When I saw the "big shot" and saluted myself he asked me where I come from? Without hesitation I said I was in the back of that house "latrine". He asked for a flash light. He said: come and show me where? I walked in front of him with a flash light. I found something looking salable. Looking I pointed at it. After a moment of silence he turned to me and turned away that none should hear and said in a low voice: I know this was not from you. You seem to have a courageous nerve but also a lot of courage and almost whispering in my ear: I let you go free this time but do not let me ever find out that you are working dentistry for the farmers. I do not care for whom you work but not for the farmers.

When the giant steamboat arrived to carry the 3,000 now well-conditioned men. We said good-bye to our onetime home, and looked nervously to our future in Bor. We were all still a bit confused how some of us could continue our fields of practice in a mining operation, but we never questioned the intentions of the Germans or our Hungarian Officers too seriously until we arrived.

By the time we arrived at our destination, everyone of us 3,000 were lined up on a mountain top. It was extremely hot and we had not yet had anything to eat.

Setting down upon dry land for a moment. However, things happened quite differently than we had expected from that point on. First, all our clothes were stripped, until we were down to our underpants only, and our shoes replaced with uncomfortable wooden clogs. Then, we were lined up high above ground on a rocky mountain ledge. The day was sweltering, and the men, exhausted and bewildered, began to swoon in the midday heat. Bereft of food to quell our stomach pangs, and water to soothe our blistered tongues and throats, we wondered what the meaning of this all was.

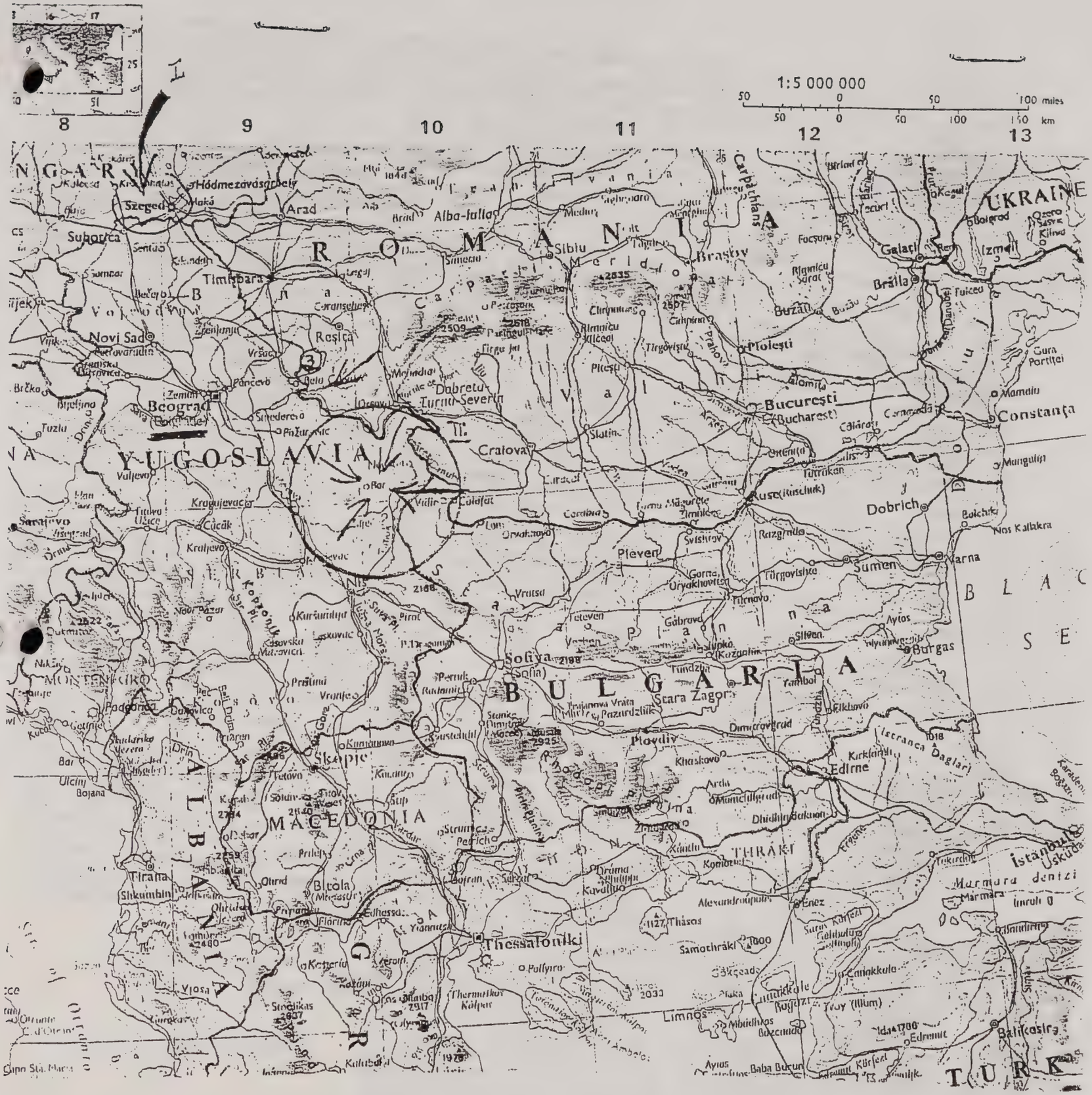
It all became painfully clear when a high-ranking German, festooned with a

smart decorated uniform, emerged to explain it all to us.

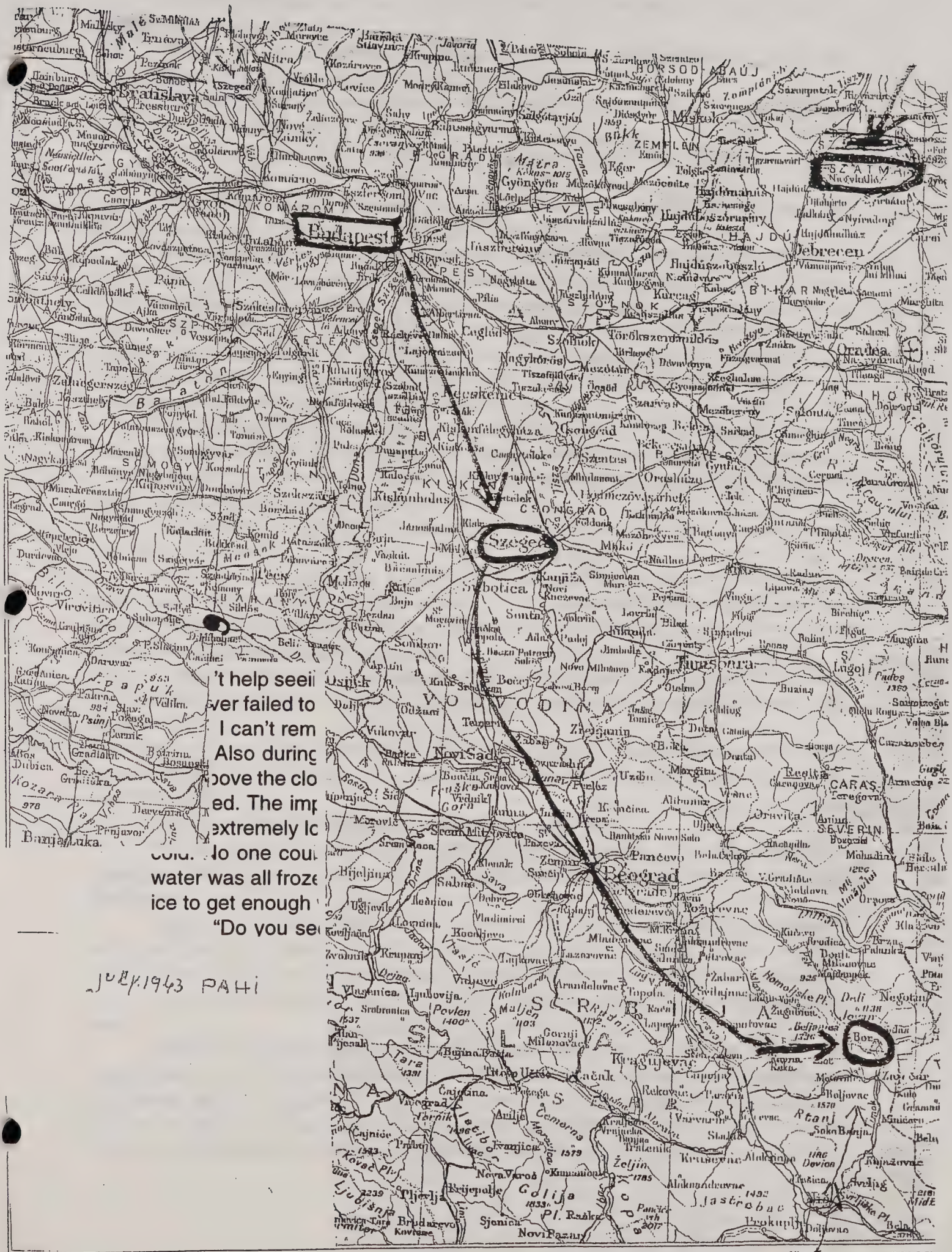
Finally, we became relieved, with the belief that he was a signal that this was all merely a test of character, to see who was most strong-willed, and who the least. But we were terribly wrong. Dead wrong. He finally opened his mouth as if to speak, but began his sentence by spitting emphatically on the ground before us. "You damned Jews!" He cried. "Always expecting your fat bellies to be full of cheese and wine. You will know night now that the good old days of wealth are over! Every one of you," he stressed the point, "will drop dead here!"

Many of those men who had endured the dehydration, starving, and sunstroke up to that point fainted away then at this brutal announcement.

The next morning we were all given shovels and were led to a tremendous mountain. Noisy diesel and smoking steam engines greeted our eyes. On a nearby open road small wagons, pulled by a little locomotive, took the raw material from the mine to nearby centers where the gold and copper would be retrieved. The railroad tracks were made of narrow, prefabricated strips of rail. Each day, we carried our shovels back and forth from our barracks. Our job was to create new platforms, level them and push tracks onto them, and then to cover the spaces between the track.



In 1943 we departed from "Seged" and "Pahi" the first 3,000 of us from Budapest with a small contingent Hungarian soldiers and high ranking officers... To watch over our safety... To bor.



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JULY.1943 PAHI

"I respectfully declare that my religion does not allow me to do this," I said, "I will not kiss a cross!"

"You dare tell me that you refuse to obey an order of his Majesty's, the Hungarian King's, traditional army officer?" He screamed.

With that, he punched me in the nose and mouth. I was instantly full of blood and I felt something snap in my nose.

"I respectfully want permission from you for an official hearing with my superior officer," I said.

"I certainly will not give you such permission, and if I find out that you reported this to any superior, I will hang you!" He replied.

As luck would have it, a few days later, I happened to see the Chief Hungarian General talking to a German Wehrmacht officer. I faced him with my very best, most courteous army salute and snapped my feet smartly. Then I asked him to forgive me for not obeying the proper channels of command and approaching him directly. He sized me up for a while and finally saluted back and heard me out. When I finished, he immediately ordered a lineup of all the Hungarian guards and asked me to identify the one with the silver cross.

"You son-of-a-bitch! You idiot! This is the Hungarian King's Honorable army! We do not mix this kind of discipline with religion, nor do we teach it," he said and then he ripped the guard's rank patch from his shoulders and added, "Tomorrow you'll be transferred to the Russian front."

And indeed, the guard disappeared. I later learned that this general was a very religious man.

My luck continued. I was assigned to the outside and was told that the engineer would take one week to teach me how to run and handle the locomotive. The job required that I make sure that the wagons that the little locomotive pulled were always loaded to their maximum height.

I also had to shovel coal dust on the fire whenever it was needed. I had to look where I was going and keep the brake in control when coming down with empty wagons.

One day a high-ranking Wehrmacht officer was going on foot in the same direction as my train. On an impulse, I stopped and asked him if he wanted to get in the locomotive with me.

He opened his mouth like an animal and said "Yes."

He jumped on the train and watched me for a while. Then he shouted a question: "What kind of millionaire was your father? And what did you study in Budapest?"

When I told him the truth, that I had been getting ready to work as a dentist with another doctor when the war arrived, he opened his mouth to show me his back molar, which gave him much pain. To me it looked like a superficial cavity.

"I could take care of that," I said, "If I had the supplies and the tools necessary."

He told me to stop the train, then and there, and that he would get someone else to take care of it. After that he took me to his office. There he had me telephone the dental depot in Zagreb for the things I needed. When I was through with the phone, he gave me a paper with his signature, giving me two days to rest, a warm shower, and meals from the German kitchen for the rest of the week.

When the materials arrived and I had my foot pedal machine, he was taken care of in one sitting. Thereafter, the Germans started to call me "the little dentist". They gave me a long, clean, white gown and anyone could come in without an appointment and get help for their dental problems.

"What do I owe you?" My patients asked.

"Frankly," I replied, "I don't need money, but bread and marmalade would be fine."

I received more than I needed, so I started to give the elevator operator a list of new prisoners and asked him to share some of my food with them. That's how each day, some prisoners got bread and marmalade.

One day, we were told that we would have to travel to another nearby camp. I found out that more than thousands of young Jewish men existed there. We didn't have to march this time, but were taken on a truck driven by a German. We heard the truck's radio say that the Russian army was pushing the Germans back from Romania and that the German army was retreating from Bulgaria. We became excited and started to discuss this momentous news. Finally we decided that now was the time to escape. The German driver overheard our plans and told us that he had always been, and still was, a communist, and would take us to Tito. He kept his word and did just that.

When we arrived, somehow people there had heard about the bread and jam on the elevator. They were kind to me and my two friends but told us to get rid of the German driver because one of Tito's laws was to never trust Germans.

One evening two of us were invited to Tito's home for supper. He lived and dressed like a king, and looked like a great leader. His wife told us what was happening to the Jews in the concentration camps. She was a beautiful and proud Jewish woman. I asked if he would give me permission and directions to get to the Danube river, so that I could cross over to see if anyone in my family was still alive. He wasn't very happy with my request. On the way back to my quarters, I met some boys and they told me that every barracks had a notice that I would be hung if I were to be caught.

Seeing marshall tito, looking all mighty very impressive in his glittering uniform with his beautiful Jewish wife. I was filled with joy. Gave me confidence in life.

Nevertheless, I did make it to the Danube but unfortunately only one other Jewish boy made it with me.

By then more people came to cross the Danube from other directions. Tragically, Germans who were escaping from Bulgaria, captured a lot of my comrades and, even though the war was almost over took them to concentration camps and almost certain death.

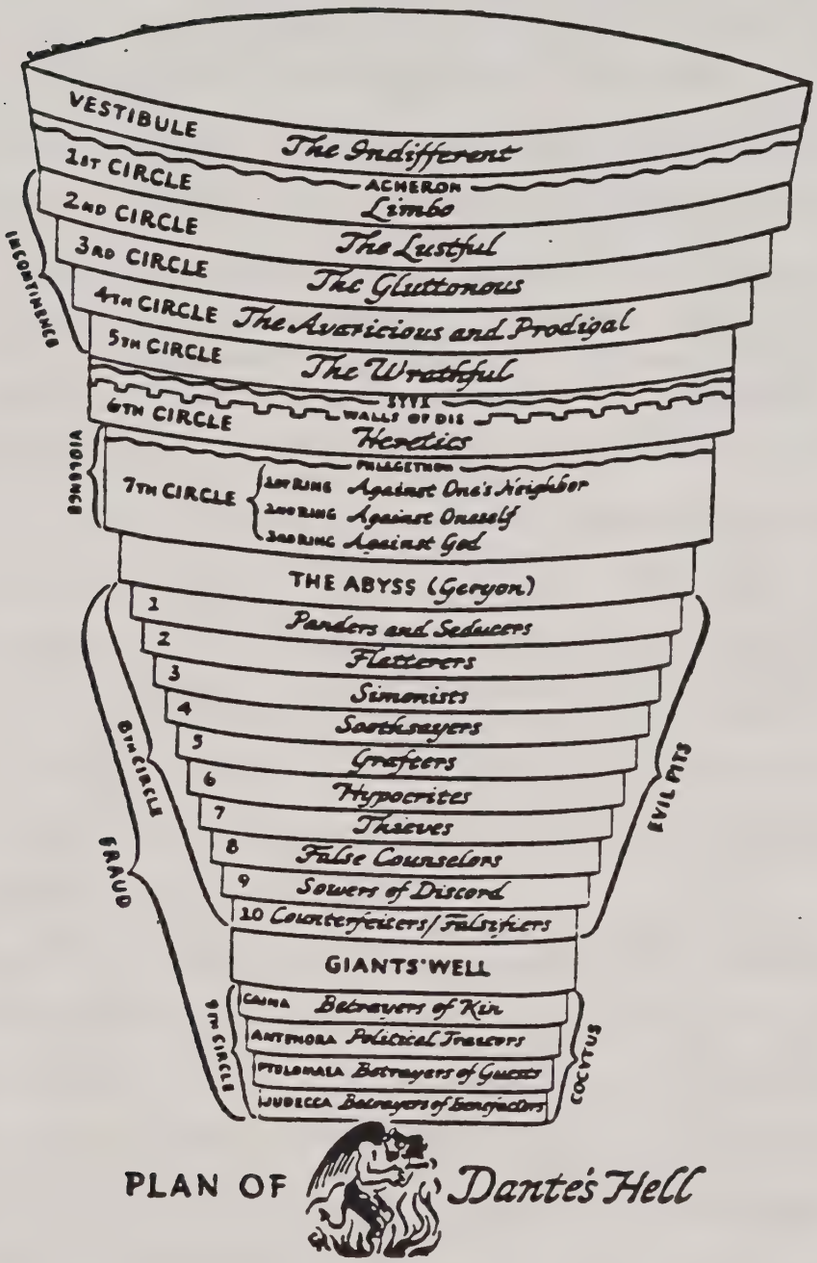
WHY YUGOSLAVIA EXPLODED

1929 a group, the Ustasha, was born. Its agents assassinated the Serbian King of Yugoslavia in 1934. That incident fueled Serb-Croat hatreds, which the Nazis ignited when they invaded in 1941.

Different newer advises from the yougoslav farmers for safer directions to stay away from the dangerous colliding from different enemies, including retracting German soldiers because the Russians arrived allready in Romania! Also more dangerous that from Bulgaria, German army are retracting and shooting with machine guns is heard shooting their way out. My secret hiding place was behind a broken down red brick factory where I was having my first class good meal from my precious backpack, a German officer with a hand revolver pistol facing me! I was answering him in German from where I came from: he seemed to be impressed with my original hungarian army cap, properly on my head with a fitting jacket and a yellow band on my left arm. of course I offered him from my unique tresors from my backpack, which he shared with his colleagues. I was asked to walk with them after some hours with them without a word spoken to me. suddenly I recognized the huge mountain circles, very similar from where I so successfully escaped from: except the mountains were taller and bigger and many more circle stairs around, more noisy baggers filling full up the little railroad wagons, the German said: das iz ja die Dantes inferno! A whermach officer asked me what kind of work I did in Bor in the Berlin barracks? (the first 3,000 Budapest Jewish volunteers). I told him that I was a wexler by the little tram track, changing for coming or going out loaded or emptied the little locomotives carrying the dynamited broken up stones.


HUNGARY
Danube
Tisza River
RUMANIA
SOMBOR
CRVENKA
SRBOBRAN
NOVI SAD
TITEL
Sava River
PANCHEVO
ZEMUN
BELGRADE
Danube
BOR
BULGARIA
BOUNDARIES AS IN 1944
RIVERS
THE WAY OF THE DEATH MARCH
SCALE
0 25 50 75 100 KM

INFERNO



PLAN OF *Dante's Hell*

A plain clothed man in German, I have the exact position for you! It was on the very top of this mountain, perfect for you, he said to me.

My second opportunity when I was placed on the otherside of the scenery looking at Dante mountain look alike for me to handle the track changer for the full loaded wagon train, the returned empty one with the same locomotive with the miserable loud diezel steam shovels again and again all also as all of us night shift did: I found myself this God forsaken mountain where the noises of the steam shovels had more of a night crying in accoustic. However, from my station place was closer to the mountain where all these loaded trains with the rocks were melted down, for the retracting of its contents, fols and copper, that mountain itself, was overloaded with electric spot lights. I was ordered to set up the track changer for the little locomotives. The open wagons they pulled were filled with the dynamited wet, broken ore. I had to do it exactly right so that the stuff could be unloaded in the place where the copper and gold were melted out of the red lava running down the mountain side in an unending stream. it was my responsibility to see that the loaded and empty wagons went in the proper direction. I would sit on a wooden seat, while one loaded train went out. I would have to lift up the changer handle and when the empty wagon came back, I switch it to other way. If there was ever an accident, I would be shot in the head.

However generally I was very thankful to be by melself, responsible for myself and i was completely on my own, alone!!

The rolling ride fire ashes volcano material leftover from the line of rocks constantly burning, running down from mountain top, way down to the valley with their horrible noise: high pitch coughing. God did not want to know anything about them.. Question is why? (Miert? was for? Pourquoi? Varum? Pentruche) reminded me of the beautiful American-Canadian Niagara Falls with its widewater flow, except this beauty uniquiness, only God can create.

I was bored and so alone and walking not too far away from my bench base and loudly singing constantly anything I could remember: high holidays, Yom Kippur and Cantorial recitatives and even Opera arias and Yiddish. Not far from my seat probably sleeping while standing.

Suddenly unexpectately I fell from the high cliff and rolled to the bottom with closed eyes. Had no idea where I will be landing. On top of the dynamited broken and wet and sharp stones. On this site of the mountain rocks and I will be picket up by the baggers trementous steam showel. I wondered what my family will remember and say about me. I constantly heard the baggers barking noise. or later in the morning. Mostly I was flabergasted how fast my brain was ticking? What will my mother and father say? or in the morning shift will find me with my body and will not know who I am. I was so by myself, I got closer to myself during this fall. My entire life flashed by my mind.

There were no lights at all, it was pitch dark, there I just sang my heart out with spiritual cantorial compositions. Usually I started out with Cantor Yossele Rosenblatt, my first number as at my concerts. We Cantors call him respectfully our father Cantor Yossele Rosenblatt (my first number was from Yossele Rosenblatt, most complicated and immensely beautiful.) I constantly remembered my childhood and the european concert trips with my father. I would twice jump to a higher octave in falsetto. I heard only one cantor in the states singing

As he did- his name Cantor Barkin. I sang and sang and also paid attention to the moon appearances for "Rosh Chodesh."

PRAYER FOR THE NEW MONTH

Chanted on the Sabbath before Rosh Chodesh by the congregation and read while standing.

May it be Thy will, Lord our God. God of our fathers, to bring on the coming new month for our good and blessing.

Grant us long life, a life of peace, a life of goodness, a life of blessing, a life with sustenance, a life of vigor and vitality.

May it be a life with reverence for Heaven and with fear of sin, a life without shame or ignominy, a life of riches and honor, a life in which there shall be among us love of the Torah and veneration for Heaven.

Yea, may it be a life in which the prayers of our heart shall be fulfilled for good. Amen. Selah.

כֹּה | אָמַר יְהוָה
קוֹל בְּרָמָה נִשְׁמָע
נְהִי בְּכִי תַּמְרוּרִים
רָחֵל מְבַכָּה עַל־בָּנֶיהָ
מֵאֲנָה לְהִנָּחֵם עַל־בָּנֶיהָ
כִּי אֵינֶנּוּ:

Saith the Lord.
Thus saith the Lord:
A voice is heard in Ramah,
Lamentation, and bitter weeping,
Rachel weeping for her children:
She refuseth to be comforted for her children.

אַחֵינוּ כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, הַנְّתוּנִים בְּצָרָה וּבִשְׁבִיָּה, הָעוֹמְדִים בֵּין בַּיָּם וּבֵין בַּיַּבָּשָׁה, הַמָּקוֹם יְרַחֵם עֲלֵיהֶם וְיוֹצִיאֵם מִצָּרָה לִרְוָחָה, וּמֵאֲפֵלָה לְאוֹרָה, וּמִשִּׁעְבּוּד לִגְאֻלָּה, הַשְּׁתָּא בַּעֲגָלָא וּבִזְמַן קָרִיב, וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן.

As for our brethren, the whole house of Israel, who are handed over to distress and captivity, on sea or land, may God have mercy on them and grant them relief, bringing them from darkness to light, from servitude to liberty, speedily and very soon; and let us say, Amen.

I thought of my original professional impressario when I was nine years old singing high pitch opera arias, and my mastery varied languages including Hungarian, German, Romanian, Yiddish and Cantorial Hebrew, at the time I was filled with self importance. People came to see how a nine year old boy would sing. This was my life singing recitatives from world famous Cantors. When suddenly reality struck and I was seated watching for the little locomotives and wagons on the way up or on the way down-this was my life-one little light on the railroad was all I saw, the rest was only darkness.

Satmar had 55,000 families(appr.) More than one quarter were Jews. But what kind of Jews? Some with wide world culture commerce and business people all with undisputable belief in God and faith and "Tora ugdula bmakom ehad". The one God who said to Moshe Rabeinu:" chaval aldoabdin od lo mistakchintoo bad for the lost of those who cannot be forgotten".

CHAPTER 2:

A Midrashic legend:

After he had destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, defeated the warriors and humiliated the kingdom of Judea, the powerful Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, haughty and merciless with his fellowman, became so inspired that he yearned to sing the praises of the Almighty. . . Came the Angel Michael, who struck him in the face.

The story ends there.

"If only the Allies knew..." People said to one another in the ghettos and in the camps. If only Roosevelt knew. If only Churchill knew. If only the Pope knew. If only the American Jews knew, and the English, the Palestinian, the Swedish, the Swiss Jews, if only they knew... The victims steadfastly believed that when they knew, the situation would change immediately. There was logic in their reasoning: Hitler and Himmler were operating the death factories without any interference because the Allies were not informed.

Do you know that not one rabbi offered to lead the High Holy Day services, that not one volunteered to spend Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur with the men and women of Bergen-Belsen? They were swamped with prayer books and ritual objects and more or less politely told to shift for themselves. With the exception of salaried officials of specialized international organizations, nobody felt the need or took the time to be with them and share their joys, as well as their mourning.

If my recollections arc correct, it happened in 1961. Golda Meir, then Israel's Foreign Minister, came to the United States and went to see President John F. Kennedy with an urgent request. Which is not unusual. Only, what does a good Jewish grandmother ask from a good Catholic President? Weapons, of course--what else? Except that John Kennedy said no. He was in the early stages of his administration and going through a period of euphoria; he was convinced that he--and he alone--could bring peace to this tormented world. He believed in the necessity and the possibility of general disarmament, coexistence and detente--and here comes Golda straight from Jerusalem, and what does she want? Weapons. How shocking...

He received her with his usual charm; he was, after all, known for his graciousness with ladies. But when she brought up the subject that was on her mind, he objected: why not talk about something else? Golda, being stubborn, said, "No, nothing else is as important."

Kennedy insisted. "Mrs. Meir," he said, "you come from the Land of the Bible, let us talk about the Bible."

"Later," said Golda. "Security first. And security means weapons."

Thereupon Kennedy said, "I'll give you money."

And Golda replied, "Money you'll give to the UJA--we need weapons."

Kennedy tried to head her into another direction; he said, "We'll give you political support abroad, diplomatic support in the United Nations."

Her reply: "Thank you, we'll take those too, but we need weapons."

Finally Kennedy went so far as to suggest a formal security pact, with guar-

antees and ironclad pledges that if attacked, Israel would be defended by the Sixth Fleet. But Golda kept on repeating, 'Thank you, thank you for all your offers, but what we need most--what we want most is weapons."

Only then did Kennedy lose his patience. "Mrs. Meir, I don't understand you," he exclaimed. "Whenever I see you, you speak to me about weapons. Whenever I see your Jewish friends here, they *speak* to me about weapons. What is the matter with all of you? Why are you so obsessed with weapons and nothing else?"

After a long silence, this is more or less what Golda said: "You see, Mr. President, I belong to an ancient people. Twice in our history our country has been destroyed, our capital demolished, our Temple reduced to ashes, our sovereignty takes from us and our children dispersed to the four corners of the earth--
yet somehow we managed to remain alive. Do you know how? I will tell you. Thanks to the shopkeeper in Bialystok and the tailor in Kiev, the industrialist in New York and the rebel in Leningrad, the Talmudist in Brooklyn and the visionary in Safed. Though they came from different backgrounds, different lands, speaking different tongues, they had one thing in common--a dream that one day our sovereignty would be restored, our children ingathered and our Temple rebuilt...

Well known good writers publishers in the L.A. Holocaust museum, remarkably so well informed! Where the Hungarian and the German Nazis friendship, precise names in the Hungarian government listed in detail.

It is a fact that in our schools in Hungary the second language was German! No French where some of the Jewish people spoke French some were also rich and very good business people and intelligent. Hungarian working in government offices were always Jewish haters, obviously and had one thing in common! On the other hand, the bigger majority of Jews (in Satmar) were quite poor with a lot of children and never asked for help and some of them were also proud. My father was the proudest person I ever met! Nobody was to know that we, the children for the last years had to go to bed hungry without food many times. Although it was a known secret source sent some help for the very poorest some of us sympathized and were reading communist books very, very secretly! And some were caught and arrested.

NAMES

VOLUME III K-Z

PREVIOUS VOLUMES IN THE NAMES SERIES;

VOLUME II NAMES OF THE JEWISH VICTIMS OF THE HUNGARIAN LABOR BATTALIONS A-J

Mother's maiden name, first name son's family name, son's first name
This index has been provided to facilitate a research in genealogy in which the researcher has only the mother's maiden name, and seeks family members.

NUSSEN PINHASZ	NUSSEN SZURE	03/00/00 SZAPLONCA
NUSSEN SALAMON	NUSSEN EVA	14/00/00 MARAMAROSSZIGET
NUSSEN SALAMON	KATZ JOLAN	11/00/00 SZAPLONCA
NUSSEN ABRAHAM	NUSSEN FANI	06/00/00
NUSSEN ABRAHAM	CZUCKER ROZA	20/04/18 KASSA
NUSSEN ALTER	NUSSEN JOLAN	08/00/00 SZAPLONCA
NUSSEN IZSAK	NUSSEN FANI	12/10/12 IZAKONYHA
NUSSEN JAKAB	NUSSEN SZURE	10/11/12 SZAPLONCA
NUSSEN JOZSEF	JOZSEF SZEREN	11/00/00 SZAPLONCA
NUSSEN LASZLO	NUSSEN ROZA	05/00/00 NAGYBOCSKO
NUSSEN LIPOT	NUSSEN EVA	12/00/00 MARAMAROSSZIGET

Nobody alive.

Labor Serviceman at Bor

The treatment of the Jewish labor servicemen in the copper mines of Bor, Yugoslavia, and their tortuous odyssey during the axis retreat from the Balkans in the fall of 1944 constitute one of the saddest chapters in the catastrophe of Hungarian Jewry. With the war going from bad to worse in 1943, the Germans became increasingly concerned with assunug the continued supply of their war industries with vitally important raw materials, including ferrous and nonferrous metals. As a consequence of the defeat and withdrawal from Soviet territory--the source of much of these materials--the Germans decided to intensify their mining operations in the areas nearer to the Third Reich. The munitions industry was especially interested in the expansion of copper production.

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CHAPTER 4: THE HOLOCAUST YEARS

The Holocaust Chronology, from 1933 to 1945, is among civilized humanity's most shameful and darkest history!

When the German revolution was coming to power, poverty was a worldwide epidemic. It became the German policy that someone should be blamed for the poor social state they were in. The finger pointed in our direction. Jews were, for the most part, unrelentless workers. Some of us chiseled out a piece from the small stone of financial solidarity at that time, and it became the German belief that we were lowering their standard of living. It was as if they believed there was only so much opportunity awaiting the many stalwart members of the working class, and we were taking more than our fair share. So the Nazis waged war against us, a race of people whose main motto in life is as simple and yet hard to understand as our way of life: "Shalom." Peace. That simplicity left us an easy target for attack. An innocuous people, we suddenly found ourselves taking more than our fair share of tragedy. I am but one storyteller, but no matter how many times the story is retold, the message remains the same. The price for ignorance is the recapitulation of tragedy. The story must be retold again and again, lest it be forgotten and relived.

In the year after I returned from the soul-cleansing visit with my parents in Satmar, the forefront of the Holocaust would rear its head in Hungary. More and more, Transylvanian Jews found their hometowns suddenly occupied by jackbooted Germans, row after row, each replete with pistols, machine guns, bayonettes, and every killing machine known to man. Without any form of retalliation, most villages had to offer immediate surrender, at which point they were taken prisoner, as of yet no one knew where. Amid the confusion, the front pages of every major newspaper began to read:

> "All well-educated young people, twenty to twenty-one years of age, preferably professionals such as engineers, dentists, and pharmacists, are needed immediately for work in their respective positions in Bor, Yugoslavia."

There were gold and copper mines in this area, which as of yet were untapped natural resources. The German government had signed a pact with the Hungarian government that not only would the 3000 men needed for this job be given the same rights as German citizens and receive first class food and adequete living quarters, but the Hungarian government would receivea percentage of the revenue from the materials produced. It seemed to be the only sure way to avoid the brunt of the their lives.

At night, the uniformed German in charge of my group would appear suddenly out of the darkness. To me he looked like the devil in Faust. In his hand he carried a wooden stick, much like a baseball bat, which he didn't hesitate to use if any "volunteer" fell asleep on the job. I was afraid of him, and I couldn't understand why he never touched me. Often during the midnight rest period, he looked around to see if anyone was watching him. When he thought it safe, he took a sandwich, wrapped in white paper, out of his long overcoat's pocket and dropped it in my direction. As I lay on the hard wet rocks, the German gave me a sort of smile and I could see the solid gold bridge inside the right side of his mouth. I got so used to lying on those rocks that they were like pillows to me and I had no problem sleeping on them.

We heard all sorts of things in our barracks. We found out that some of our boys had disappeared. We all assumed they had run away to Tito. We also heard that in Yugoslavia there was another leader, just as famous as Tito, except that he was a ruthless Nazi named Stoyadinovitch, who collaborated closely with the Germans. When his troops caught any of our boys, they shot them immediately. Daily announcements revealed the names of those who suffered that fate.

Our food was always some kind of soup and a piece of bread. It was hard to determine what the soup was made of, but there was no doubt about the contents of the bread. It was at least fifty percent sawdust. Close to where we stood in line waiting for our portion, invariably two or three of our boys were hung two meters off the ground with their hands tied behind their backs. Sometimes they fainted from the heat, and then a bucket of water was emptied on them. This was done by our Hungarian protectors as a disciplinary measure.

If one of the boys was caught trying to run away during the night, he was put in a deep hole hug in the earth and a wooden door was put on top of it to seal the opening. We were all lined up to watch these boys as they were locked up, and we couldn't help seeing the black and blue bruises on their faces and eyes. Our keepers never failed to announce how long the lock up would last: always five days and nights. I can't remember ever seeing anyone taken out of there alive.

Also during the nights, we heard large numbers of American planes flying high above the clouds on their way to Germany. We didn't worry at all that we might get killed. The important fact was that they were on our side. Still our morale became extremely low. We all felt hopeless. As the season changed, it became very cold. No one could keep any hygiene, not even to wash their face, because the water was all frozen, but I didn't give up. I used my dental tooth pliers to break the ice to get enough water to wash the top part of my body.

"Do you see this young man?" two German officers remarked when they saw what I was doing, "This Jew will remain alive!"

Once, in the morning, I came in from my night shift and, as usual, I made sure to give the guard the required military salute in the correct manner.

"You did not execute your salute properly," he said as if he didn't see, "I order you to do twenty push-ups. Get to the floor inside my cabin."

I did as he instructed and counted each of the twenty push-ups out loud. Then, once again, I gave my correct salute.

"Repeat another twenty," he shouted.

As I started from the beginning, he shoved his silver necklace with a cross under my nose with his feet and instructed me to kiss it.

"I respectfully declare that my religion does not allow me to do this," I said, "I will not kiss a cross!"

"You dare tell me that you refuse to obey an order of his Majesty's, the Hungarian King's, traditional army officer?" he screamed.

With that, he punched me in the nose and mouth. I was instantly full of blood and I felt something snap in my nose.

"I respectfully want permission from you for an official hearing with my superior officer," I said.

"I certainly will not give you such permission, and if I find out that you reported this to any superior, I will hang you!" he replied.

As luck would have it, a few days later, I happened to see the Chief Hungarian General talking to a German Wehrmacht officer. I faced him with my very best, most courteous army salute and snapped my feet smartly. Then I asked him to forgive me for not obeying the proper

When the giant steamboat arrived to carry the 3000 now well-conditioned men, we said goodbye to our onetime home, and looked nervously to our future in Bor. We were all still a bit confused how some of us could continue our fields of practice in a mining operation, but we never questioned the intentions of the Germans or our Hungarian Officers too seriously until we arrived.

By the time we arrived at our destination, everyone of us 3,000 were lined up on a mountain top. It was extremely hot and we had not yet had anything to eat.

setting down upon dry land for a moment. However, things happened quite differently than we had expected from that point on. First, all our clothes were stripped, until we were down to our underpants only, and our shoes replaced with uncomfortable wooden clogs. Then, we were lined up high above ground on a rocky mountain ledge. The day was sweltering, and the men, exhausted and bewildered, began to swoon in the midday heat. Bereft of food to quell our stomach pangs, and water to soothe our blistered tongues and throats, we wondered what the meaning of this all was.

It all became painfully clear when a high-ranking German, festooned with a smart decorated uniform, emerged to explain it all to us. Finally, we became relieved, with the belief that he was a signal that this was all merely a test of character, to see who was most strong-willed, and who the least. But we were terribly wrong. Dead wrong.

He finally opened his mouth as if to speak, but began his sentence by spitting emphatically on the ground before us. "You damned Jews!" he cried. "Always expecting your fat bellies to be full of cheese and wine. You will know right now that the good old days of wealth are over! *Every one of you,"* and he stressed this point, "*will drop dead here!"*

Many of those men who had endured the dehydration, starving, and sunstroke up to that point fainted away then at this brutal announcement.

The next morning we were all given shovels and were led to a tremendous mountain. Noisy diesel and smoking steam engines greeted our eyes. On a nearby open road small wagons, pulled by a little locomotive, took the raw material from the mine to nearby centers where the gold and copper would be retrieved. The railroad tracks were made of narrow, pre-fabricated strips of rail. Each day, we carried our shovels back and forth from our barracks. Our job was to continually create new platforms, level them and push railroad tracks onto them, and then to cover the spaces between the track.

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with *SA-Obergruppenführer* Dietrich von Jagow, the German Minister in Budapest. Jagow had no difficulty in immediately obtaining the concurrence of "certain influential gentlemen" in the Hungarian Ministry of Defense, but the transfer required the agreement of the Hungarian government, which was a political question. Fränk, with Speer's blessing, got in touch with the German Foreign Office to bring about the effectuation of the deal, which had the approval of the *Reichsführer-SS*.[134]

Fränk's request was relayed by Bergmann, Minister in the *Inland* Section of the German Foreign Office, to Ribbentrop on February 23. He promptly approved it.[135] Thereupon Bergmann instructed Jagow to proceed with negotiations over the details of conditions of employment and remuneration. These were to be settled in consultation with Wilhelm Neyer, OT-*Hauptfrontführer* and OT representative in Budapest, and a certain Captain Leitner.[136]

Neyer was very influential in Budapest, especially in matters relating to the labor service system. He was the official liaison of the OT to the Ministry of Defense, especially KMOF. As a matter of fact, his office was adjacent to Horny's, and his close relationship with Horthy, who spoke perfect German, guided much of KMOF's activities. He was constantly kept informed about all matters relating to the labor service system and was instrumental in the decisions pertaining to the call-up and deployment of the servicemen.[137] Neyer was also the exclusive link between OT and the Hungarian Ministry of Industry.[138]

Shortly after Bergmann's instructions had been relayed to Jagow, Neyer approached KMOF requesting that the Hungarian government authorize the allocation of Jewish labor service companies for work on German war-related projects. Specifically, he demanded the deployment of 20 labor service companies with 4,000 men for work at the German shipyards at Reval, Estonia, and of 10,000 men for the copper mines at Bor.[139] In addition, he demanded the replenishment of the labor service companies with the Second Hungarian Army in the Ukraine.

Horny immediately relayed the German demands to Vilmos Nagy, who was aware of the brutal conditions at Bor. Nagy was vehemently opposed to granting the demands, and the Hungarian Council of Ministers went along with his recommendations.[140] In the meantime, however, the "influential gentlemen" in the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff, including General Ferenc Szombathelyi, the Chief of Staff, continued to encourage the Germans by promising them the necessary manpower. When informed about these dealings with the Germans behind his back, Nagy was upset not only because Szombathelyi and the

others had no political authority to make such promises, but also because of his awareness of the slave-labor conditions that prevailed in the mines.[141]

The Germans, of course, did not give up and continued to exert great pressure, which was soon accompanied by a demand for the replacement of the Minister of Defense. Aware of Nagy's opposition to the extradition of Hungarian citizens, both Prime Minister Kállay and Minister of Industry Géza Bornemissza apparently tried to convince him on June 12, 1943, to change his position and to allow at least the assignment of 2,000 labor servicemen to Serbia. Nagy remained steadfast in his opposition, especially since he was by then convinced that the Germans would lose the war.[142]

With the resignation of Nagy there was no further obstacle to the granting of the Germans' request. On June 23, Jagow informed the Foreign Office that the Hungarians had made a firm commitment for the deployment of 6,000 labor servicemen in companies under the command of Hungarian officers.[143] The final agreement was hammered out on July 1, and was signed on July 2 by Neyer for OT and by General Imre Ruszkiczay-Rüdiger, Hungarian Deputy Minister of Defense.[144] The agreement provided that:

- The Hungarian government would place at the disposal of OT 3,000 Jewish workers organized into military companies. They would be handed over to the Germans at the Prahovo Danube station, with the first installment of 1,000 men to be delivered no later than July 15, 1943.
- The Jewish companies were to remain under Hungarian military control; in case of difficulties, the commander of the Jewish battalions was to prepare duplicate written reports – one for the Hungarian Ministry of Defense and one for OT.
- In compensation for the work force, the Germans would deliver monthly to the Hungarians 100 tons of copper ore containing at least 30 percent copper in a form usable by Hungarian foundries. The shipments were to be handed over to the Hungarians against payment at Prahovo.
- The details on the deployment, feeding, and housing of the work force were to be those worked out by the joint commission which made an on-the-spot check in behalf of the Hungarian Ministry of Defense between May 26 and June 1, 1943.

– The Hungarian Ministry of Defense would place at the disposal of OT additional Jewish manpower if further copper shipments were offered by the Ministry of Supplies of the Third Reich.[145]

The agreement was hailed by most Germanophile elements in the Ministry of Defense and the country as beneficial for Hungary. The people associated with KMOF – including, of course, Horny – emphasized that the agreement was beneficial and necessary to assure the expansion of Hungarian industrial production, since part of the copper ore produced by the labor servicemen in Bor was promised to the Hungarians.[146] These proponents, however, conveniently neglected to mention that the Hungarian war industry itself was to a large extent working in the service of the Third Reich.

Although the agreement was signed on July 2, it appears that the Hungarian Ministry of Defense had earlier already authorized the transfer of some Hungarian Jewish servicemen. According to a survivor of the Bor ordeal, his company arrived at the copper mines on June 15, 1943.[147]

The detailed instructions for the implementation of the Hungarian-German agreement were spelled out in a decree (No. 111 470 eln. KMOF-1943) of the Minister of Defense signed by Ruszkiczay-Rüdiger on July 6.[148] The labor services companies readied, under the agreement, for deployment in July 1943 are listed in table 10.4.

The labor servicemen scheduled for deployment in the mines were given a short furlough to enable them to acquire the necessary clothing and equipment. They were required to return to duty two days before their scheduled departure.[149] The Hungarian authorities assumed the financial costs of these labor service companies until they reached Prahovo in Serbia. From that point on, these burdens were assumed by OT. Overall immediate command over these companies was entrusted to Lieutenant-Colonel András Balogh. Just before their departure, the labor servicemen and the members of their families who came to bid them farewell in Hódmezővásárhely heard a spirited and encouraging speech by Neyer, who apparently was eager to quell the anxieties of the Jews and of the decent strata of Hungarian society.[150]

The labor service companies listed in table 10.4 arrived in Bor early in August 1943. Many of the 3,000 labor servicemen I, WILLIAM B. NUSSEN WAS AMONG THESE 3,000 !!

Conditions of Labor. in Bor, the labor servicemen were assigned to various camps that were established along the twenty or so miles between this mining town and Žagubica. The largest of these camps was "Berlin," which was situated in Bor, and served as headquarters for both the OT and the Hungarian military personnel. As in the other camps, including "München," "Bregenz," "Graz," "Heidenau," "Innsbruck," "Voralberg," and "Westfahlen," the labor servicemen in the "Berlin" camp lived under Hungarian military control and discipline. At work, however, they were under the immediate supervision of German foremen. They worked under grueling conditions for about 11 hours a day, receiving 7 *Dinars* and half a pound of bread and a portion of watery soup per day in compensation.[153]

Some of the labor servicemen were employed in building the Bor-Žagubica railway line; others were engaged in road repair work. The majority, however, worked in the mines. Especially hard and exhausting was the lot of those building the access tunnel, which was 5 kilometers long and several hundred meters deep. The labor servicemen had to work in knee-deep water breathing air filled with suffocating dust and explosive gas.[154]

During their leisure time, including Sundays, they were often ordered out for "household" chores – cutting wood for the kitchen or doing repair work on the buildings. Some of the company commanders and the guards were especially sadistic. On the slightest excuse they would hang the "culprits" by their hands, which were tied behind their backs. On some occasions the guards would bang against the rope or hit the victims until they lost consciousness.[155]

Among the officers who distinguished themselves by their cruelty to the labor servicemen were Ferenc Asztalos, Sergeant Császár, Pál Juhász, József Katz, János Schnitzer, Ferenc Szokolits, András Tálas, and Frigyes Torma.[156] They not only tortured the labor servicemen, but also stole their food rations, which the OT supplied on a weekly basis.

Each company had its own commander and auxiliary military personnel. Overall command was exercised by Lieutenant-Colonel András Balogh until December 1943, when he was replaced by Lieutenant-Colonel Ede Marányi.[157] Like many of his subordinates, Marányi was quite sadistic, especially after the German occupation of Hungary on March 19, 1944.

Despite the deplorable living and working conditions in the camp and mines, the losses in life were relatively negligible.[158] Tragedy befell the draftees during and after their withdrawal in September-October 1944, when the Axis forces were compelled to evacuate the Balkans under Red Army and Yugoslav partisan pressure.

The Road to Disaster. The Germans decided to evacuate the Bor area late in August 1944. The OT abandoned its projects and tried to salvage as much of its heavy machinery as possible. The close to 6,200 labor servicemen were once in "Berlin" camp prior to their "march back home." The first contingent, consisting of an estimated 3,200 to 3,600 labor servicemen, left Bor on September 17 under the escort of about 100 guards. Among their commanders were First Lieutenant, Sándor Pataki and Second Lieutenant Pál Juhász.[159] few of the labor servicemen, presumably among those speaking Serbo-Croatian, escaped.[160]

soldiers marched ahead of it and 20 behind it. The flanks were guarded by soldiers stationed about five yards apart.

Zagubica,

Bergen Belsen
HILDA BROWN WAS THE SS WOMEN

-Known as a death camp.
-Death was accomplished by slow starvation, beatings, illness, or shootings by the SS.
-Electirc wire fences seperated the men's bunkers from the women's. Prisoners laid on bare ground or on the piles of dead bodies in the bunkers.
-Once a day a meal of grass soup mixed with sand was provided.
-Approximately 1,000 people occupied one bunker.

- clothes were tow ppiece striped pajamas for the men and shifts for the women. No shoes.
- Typhus permeated the camps.
- April 14th was liberation day. The camp was liberated by the British, days before the German's planned to bomb the camp completely destroying the living along with the cruel remnants of the dead.
- Up to the last minute, while the English had already surrounded the camp, the Germans were busy emptying out their last bullets onto the prisoners held within.
- At the point of liberation, people rushed towards the British tanks that brought their freedom, many in the hysteria run over by the tanks as they rushed toward their freedom. THE ENGLISH BOMB THE TRAIN, THEY DIDN'T KNOW THE JEWS WHERE IN IT.

soldiers marched ahead of it and 20 behind it. The flanks were guarded by soldiers stationed about five yards apart. When the column reached Zagubica,

I FELT DEEP IN MY HEART AND GUTS THAT THE MOMENT ARRIVED FOR ME TO ESCAPE!

I LOOKED OUT FROM THE COLUMN SIDES WHERE THE HUNGARIAN SOLDIERS ARE, IN THE FRONT AND IN THE BACK: I WAS IN THE MIDDLE BETWEEN THEM.

I JUMPED OUT FROM THE COLUMN TO THE SIDE WHICH WAS LOWER, UNDER SOME GREEN BUSHES HIDING!

IMMEDIATELY A FRIEND OF MINE LANDED NEXT TO ME! HE SAID:

I JUMPED TO YOU TO WARN YOU THAT THIS IS VERY RISKY. THEY WILL LOOK FOR YOU SOON AND SHOOT YOU. COME BACK TO THE COLUMN!

ALSO THIS IS AN AREA WHERE THE NAZI SERB BASTARDS HAVE THEIR TERRITORY.

By then more people came to cross the Danube from other directions. Tragically, Germans who were escaping from Bulgaria captured ME AND my comrade and, even though the war was almost over, took them to concentration camps and almost certain death.

THE MARCH OF DEATH FROM SERBIA TO HUNGARY (September 1944) AND THE SLAUGHTER (Story of a survivor of the death pit)

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The Bor mines, which are situated about 200 kilometers (124 miles) southeast of Belgrade, supplied about 50 percent of the copper requirements of the German war industry. The Jews were tortured and made to run from place to place all day. At 9:00 p.m. They were allowed back to their quarters only to be awakened 90 minutes later.

They were robbed by Hungarian guards before being handed over to the Germans. The labor servicemen had to surrender all their remaining valuables, including their wedding bands, to the SS. Then, in intervals of 10-15 minutes they were taken in groups of 20 to a huge pit that was used as a source of raw materials for the manufacturing of bricks. The pit had been enlarged a short while before by labor servicemen, about 50 Jewish and a larger number of Jehovah's Witnesses.[167] Here is how one of the few survivors of the massacre[168] described the executions:

> The pit was about 40-50 meters long and 8-10 meters wide. Its depth was about 1 1/2 meters.... On either side of the pit four SS-men were standing. Two of them brought up the victims, and two shot them. They would take 20 to one side and 20 to the other.... They were firing from a range of three meters.... I saw all this. Then they did the same to me. He (the SS-man) came up to me, prepared me and then stepped aside. Thus I also received the present, the bullet.

The shooting ended around 4:00 a.m. on October 8, by which time from 700 to 1,000 Jews had been massacred.[170]

By NATHAN ECK

Labor Serviceman at Bor

THE LABOR SERVICE SYSTEM

With *SA-Obergruppenfuhrer* Dietrich von Jagow, the German Minister in Budapest. Jagow had no difficulty in immediately obtaining the concurrence of "certain influential gentlemen." In the Hungarian Ministry of Defense, but the transfer required the agreement of the Hungarian government, which was a political question. Frank, with Speer's blessing, got in touch with the German Foreign Office to bring about the effectuation of the deal, which had the approval of the *Reichsfuhrer -SS.*[134]

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Horny immediately relayed the German demands to Vilmos Nagy, who was aware of the brutal conditions at Bor. Nagy was vehemently opposed to granting the demands, and the Hungarian Council of Ministers went along with his recommendations.[140] In the meantime, however, the "influential gentlemen" in the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff, including General Ferenc Szombathelyi, the Chief of Staff, continued to encourage the Germans by promising them the necessary manpower. When informed about these dealings with the Germans behind his back, Nagy was upset not only because Szombathelyi and the others had no political authority to make such promises, but also because of his awareness of the slave-labor conditions that prevailed in the mines.[141]

The Germans, of course, did not give up and continued to exert great pressure, which was soon accompanied by a demand for the replacement of the Minister of Defense. Aware of Nagy's opposition to the extradition of Hungarian citizens, both Prime Minister Kallay and Minister of Industry Geza Bornemissza apparently tried to convince him on June 12, 1943, to change his position and to allow at least the assignment of 2,000 labor servicemen to Serbia. Nagy remained steadfast in his opposition, especially since he was by then convinced that the Germans would lose the war.[142]

With the resignation of Nagy there was no further obstacle to the granting of the Germans' request On June 23, Jagow informed the Foreign Office that the Hungarians had made a firm commitment for the deployment of 6,000 labor servicemen in companies under the command of Hungarian officers.[143] The final agreement was hammered out on July 1, and was signed on July 2 by Neyer for OT and by General Imre Ruszkiczay-Rudiger, Hungarian Deputy Minister of Defense.[144] The agreement provided that:

-The Hungarian government would place at the disposal of OT 3,000 Jewish workers organized into military companies. They would be handed over to the Germans at the Prahovo Danube station, with the first installment of 1,000 men to be delivered no later than July 15, 1943.

-The Jewish companies were to remain under Hungarian military control; in case of difficulties, the commander of the Jewish battalions was to prepare duplicate written reports-one for the Hungarian Ministry of Defense and one for OT.

-In compensation for the work force, the Germans would deliver monthly to the Hungarians 100 tons of copper ore containing at least 30 percent copper in a form usable by Hungarian foundries. The shipments were to be handed over to the Hungarians against payment at Prahovo.

-The details on the deployment, feeding, and housing of the work force were to be those worked out by the joint commission which made an on-the-spot check on behalf of the Hungarian Ministry of Defense between May 26 and June 1, 1943.

-The Hungarian Ministry of Defense would place at the disposal of OT additional Jewish manpower if further copper shipments were offered by the Ministry of Supplies of the Third Reich.[145]

The agreement was hailed by most Germanophile elements in the Ministry of Defense and the country as beneficial for Hungary. The people associated with KMOF-including, of course, Horny-emphasized that the agreement was beneficial and necessary to assure the expansion of Hungarian industrial production, since part of the copper ore produced by the labor servicemen in Bor was promised to the Hungarians.[146] These proponents, however, conveniently neglected to mention that the Hungarian war industry itself was to a large extent working in the service of the Third Reich.

Although the agreement was signed on July 2, it appears that the Hungarian Ministry of Defense had earlier already authorized the transfer of some Hungarian Jewish servicemen. According to a survivor of the Bor ordeal, his company arrived at the copper mines on June 15, 1943.[147]

The detailed instructions for the implementation of the Hungarian-German agreement were spelled out in a decree (No. 111 470 eln. KMOF-1943) of the Minister of Defense signed by Ruszkiczay-Rudiger on July 6.[148] The labor services companies readied, under the agreement, for deployment in July 1943 are listed in table 10.4.

The labor servicemen scheduled for deployment in the mines were given a short furlough to enable them to acquire the necessary clothing and equipment. They were required to return to duty two days before their scheduled departure.[149] The Hungarian authorities assumed the financial costs of these labor service companies until they reached Prahovo in Serbia From that point on, these burdens were assumed by OT. Overall immediate command over these companies was entrusted to Lieutenant-Colonel Andras Balogh. Just before their departure, the labor servicemen and the members of their families who came to bit them farewell in Hodmezovasarhely heard a spirited and encouraging speech by Neyer, who apparently was eager to quell the anxieties of the Jews and of the decent strata of Hungarian society.[150]

The labor service companies listed in table 10.4 arrived in Bor early in August 1943. Many of the 3,000 labor servicemen.

Conditions of Labor. Upon their arrival in Bor, the labor servicemen were assigned to various camps that were established along the twenty or so miles between this mining town and Zagubica. The largest of these camps was "Berlin," which was situated in Bor, and served as headquarters for both the OT and the Hungarian military personnel. As in the other camps, including "Munchen," "Bregenz," "Graz," "Heidenau," "Innsbruck," "Voralberg," and "Westfahlen," the labor servicemen in the "Berlin" camp lived under Hungarian military control and discipline. At work, however, they were under the immediate supervision of German foremen. They worked under grueling conditions for about 11 hours a day, receiving 7 *Dinars* and half a pound of bread and a portion of watery soup per day in compensation.

Some of the labor servicemen were employed in building the Bor-Zagubica railway line; others were engaged in road repair work. The majority, however, worked in the mines. Especially hard and exhausting was the lot of those building the access tunnel, which was 5 kilometers long and several hundred meters deep. The labor servicemen had to work in knee-deep water breathing air filled with suffocating dust and explosive gas.[154]

During their leisure time, including Sundays, they were often ordered out for "household" chores-cutting wood for the kitchen or doing repair work on the buildings. Some of the company commanders and the guards were especially sadistic. On the slightest excuse they would hang the "culprits" by their hands, which were tied behind their backs. On some occasions the guards would bang against the rope or hit the victims until they lost consciousnes.[155]

Among the officers who distinguished themselves by their cruelty to the labor servicemen were Ferenc Asztalos, Sergeant Csaszar, Pal Juhasz, Jozsef Katz, Janos Schnitzer, Ferenc Szokolits, Andras Talas, and Frigyes Torma.[156] They not only tortured the labor servicemen, but also stole their food rations, which the OT supplied on a weekly basis.

Each company had its own commander and auxiliary military personnel. Overall command was exercised by Lieutenant-Colonel Andras Balogh until December 1943, when he was replaced by Lieutenant-Colonel Ede Maranyi.[157] Like many of his subordinates, Maranyi was quite sadistic, especially after the German occupation of Hungary on March 19, 1944.

Despite the deplorable living and working conditions in the camp and mines, the losses in life were relatively negligible.[158] Tragedy befell the draftees during and after their withdrawal in September-October 1944, when the Axis forces were compelled to evacuate the Balkans under Red Army and Yugoslav partisan pressure.

The Road to Disaster. The Germans decided to evacuate the Bor area late in August 1944. The OT abandoned its projects and tried to salvage as much of its heavy machinery as possible. The close to 6,200 labor servicemen were once in "Berlin" camp prior to their "march back home." The first contingent, consisting of an estimated 3,200 to 3,600 labor servicemen, left Bor on September 17 under the escort of about 100 guards. Among their commanders were First Lieutenant, Sandor Pataki and Second Lieutenant Pal Juhasz.[159] Few of the labor servicemen, presumably among those speaking Serbo-Croatian, escaped; a few others, mostly stragglers, were rescued by the Yugoslav partisans.[160] The first stop of their retreat was Belgrade, which they reached via Zagubica, Petrovac, Mala Krsna, and Smederovo on October 2. While the men were driven mercilessly with little or no food and water, they suffered only one casualty along this stretch of the road.[161] The Serbs along the road tried to help them, brought them food and water, and urged them to escape, but few dared.[162] Following their arrival in Belgrade, the labor servicemen were "quartered" for a few days in Zemun (Zimony), the area used for international exhibits near the Yugoslav capital.

The survivors of the column left Cservenka under SS escort at 5:00 a.m. toward Zombor, only to be exposed to further bloodshed. Near Szivac (Stari Sivac), for example, a German soldier on a motorcycle killed several Jews who had been resting by the roadside. The column was also fired on by Hungarian soldiers from a train withdrawing along the Szivac-Kereny (Krnja) railway line. Hundreds of casualties were suffered in Zombor and along the road between Zombor and Bezdan.[171] On October 12 the surviving members of the column reached Baja-a city that was already *Judenrein* since June.

During their stay in Baja the *Nyilas*, aided by the Germans, staged the coup of October 15. The situation became even more desperate not only for the labor servicemen, but also for the Jews of Budapest. From Baja the labor servicemen were driven on to Bonyhad, where many lost their lives, and then on to Szentkiralyszabadja. Here Lieutenant-Colonel Maranyi, who resumed command, executed seven of them "to reestablish order and dicipline."172 The death march continued early in November toward Mosonmagyarovar along the Veszprem-Gyor route.[173]

Near the Austrian border they worked for a while, together with other death-march victims from Budapest,[174] on fortifications "for the defense of Vienna." Many among the survivors ended up in various German concentration camps, including Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Dachau, Flossenburg, and Oranienburg-Sachsenhausen, from which only a relatively few returned.

Among the Jewish labor service victims who were evacuated from Bor was

Miklos Radnoti, a noted Hungarian poet and literary translator. His end came on the route to Mosonmagyarovar. Unable to march, he was taken to Gyor with several other incapacitated labor servicemen, but no hospital would admit them. Cadet Sergeant Andras Talas, notorious for his brutality in Bor, decided on their elimination. Radnoti was shot by Hungarian guards together with 21 other labor servicemen and buried in a mass grave at Abda, near Gyor.[175] When his body was exhumed after the war, his last poems were found in his ragged raincoat.[176] They reflect the agony and the martyrdom of the Jewish labor servicemen who served in and around Bor.

The second contingent of around 2,600 labor servicemen evacuated from Bor on September 29 was much luckier. It was one of the ironies of history that many among the labor servicemen in this group had been eager to join the first contingent in order to "get home fast." Their earlier disappointment soon turned to joy. They survived the war almost intact. Their evacuation route was the same as the one taken by the first group. The column of labor servicemen was well guarded: 20 armed Hungarian guards and 100 heavily armed German soldiers.
The column was kept in strict confinement near the railway stabon for three days.

The third stop was Cservenka, a road stretch that included the Swabian communities of Szenttamas (Srbobran), Ujverbasz (Novi Vrbas), and Kula Near Szenttamas about 20 of the Jews were killed for an attempt to drink water and ten more were murdered near Ujverbasz for being unable to walk.[164] The column reached Cservenka on October 6. The following day, some 800 labor servicemen were marched on toward Zombor under the escort of Swabian SS-men and Bosnian Ustashi. From there, this group was driven amidst unbelievable cruelties via Bezdan and Beli Manastir to Mohacs, where it was once again taken over by Hungarian guards.[165] Those remaining in Cservenka were taken over by an SS unit.[166]

The Slaughter of October 7-8, 1944. At Cservenka the Jewish servicemen were quartered in the Glaeser Welker Rauch brickyards. Rumors were rampant on October 7 that the Hungarian commander's request for supplies had been rejected by the Germans at Zombor and that the Germans had decided to eliminate the Jews in order to free the roads for the withdrawing Axis forces. The day was spent in terror and great agony, for the SS, in preparation for the executions, decided to first destroy the Jews' spirit and tire them out totally. The Jews were tortured and made to run from place to place all day.

Soldiers marched ahead of it and 20 behind it The flanks were guarded by soldiers stationed about five yards apart. When the column reached Zagubica, Serbian peasants alerted the partisans. Careful not to hit the labor servicemen, the partisans attacked the rear group of soldiers, causing many casualties. The surviving guards surrendered without firing a shot.

With the aid of one of the labor servicemen, Ipoly Perl of Szabadka, who served as interpreter, the partisans interrogated the Hungarian officers and guards. The judgment was not long in coming. The partisans executed about 100 of them, including Frigyes Torma and Janos Schnitzer. The liberated labor servicemen were fed and taken care of by Serbian peasants. Shortly after the Soviet liberation of Bor, they were taken to Temesvar (Timisoara), Romania, together with about 200 debilitated labor servicemen who had been left in the "Berlin" camp with the withdrawing Hungarians.[177]

The Labor Service System During the German Occupation

The Sztojay Era. Following the German occupation of Hungary on March 19, 1944, and the establishment of the pro-Nazi Dome Sztojay government, the labor service system turned out to be a source of rescue for many Jewish men threatened by deportation. While the Jewish labor servicemen in the Ukraine and in Bor continued to suffer from the harsh and often cruel treatment of their superiors, those called up or volunteering for duty in the labor service companies stationed within the country fared comparatively well, at least until the *Nyilas era.*

It is one of the ironies of history that the Ministry of Defense, which had been viewed as one of the chief causes of suffering among Jews during the previous four to five years, suddenly emerged as the major governmental institution actively involved in the saving of Jewish lives The motivations behind the Ministry's actions are not absolutely clear. It is safe to assume that many local commanders, aware of the realities of the ghettoization and deportation program and motivated by humanitarian instincts, did everything in their power to rescue as many Jews as possible. One of the most praiseworthy of these military figures was Colonel Imre Reviczky, the Commander of Labor Battalion No X of Nagybanya. Under his direction, all Jews who appeared for service his headquarters were immediately inducted and provided with food and shelter, irrespective of their age or state of health.[178]

QUOTATION FROM ELIE WIESEL

The Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel had lived only for God during his childhood in Hungary; his life had been shaped by the disciplines of the Talmud, and he had hoped one day to be initiated into the mysteries of Kabbalah. As a boy, he was taken to Auschwitz and later to Buchenwald. During his first night in the death camp, watching the black smoke coiling to the sky from the crematorium where the bodies of his mother and sister were to be thrown. He knew that the flames had consumed his faith forever. He was in a world which was the objective correlative of the Godless world imagined by Nietzsche. "Never should I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live," he wrote years later. "Never shall I forget these moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust."[33]

One day the Gestapo hanged a child. Even the SS were disturbed by the prospect of hanging a young boy in front of thousands of spectators. The child who, Wiesel recalled, had the face of a "sad-eyed angel," was silent, lividly pale and almost calm as he ascended the gallows. Behind Wiesel, one of the other prisoners asked: "Where is God? Where is He?" It took the child half an hour to die, while the prisoners were forced to look him in the face. The same man asked again: "Where is God now?" And Wiesel heard a voice within him make this answer: "Where is He? Here He is--He is hanging here on this gallows."[34]

Dostoevsky had said that the death of a single child could make God unacceptable, but even he, no stranger to inhumanity, had not imagined the death of a child in such circumstances. The horror of Auschwitz is a stark challenge to many of the more conventional ideas of God. The remote God of the philosophers, lost in a transcendent *apatheia*, becomes intolerable. Many Jews can no longer subscribe to the biblical idea of God who manifests himself in history, who, they say with Wiesel, died in Auschwitz. The idea of a personal God, like one of us writ large, is fraught with difficulty. If this God is omnipotent, he could have prevented the Holocaust. If he was unable to stop it, he is impotent and useless; if he could have stopped it and chose not to, he is a monster. Jews are not the only people who believe that the Holocaust put an end to conventional theology.

Yet it is also true that even in Auschwitz some Jews continued to study the Talmud and observe the traditional festivals, not because they hoped that God would rescue them but because it made sense. There is a story that one day in Auschwitz, a group of Jews put God on trial. They charged him with cruelty and betrayal. Like Job, they found no consolation in the usual answers to the problem of evil and suffering in the midst of this current obscenity. They could find no excuse for God, no extenuating circumstances, so they found him guilty and, presumably, worthy of death. The Rabbi pronounced the verdict. Then he looked up and said that the trial was over: it was time for the evening prayer.

Elie Wiesel wrote: "The Messiah, if He is late coming, it is perhaps because He is ashamed to reveal Himself".

The Kassover Rabbi, when he visited Maideneck, one of the extermination camps, accused God of being a grave digger, and asked Him whether He at least wept for the death of his people...
And in his internal dialogue he heard a reply:

"You exaggerate my friend. You go to God to keep alive. The bond that links Me to you and your people, is that not enough? What do you want? Tell Me, do you want redemption?"

Nietsche, the European, German, non-Jewish psychologist, said "I am sick with the great superficiality...Judaism is the only rational thought and interpretation according to a scheme we cannot escape".

Nietsche challenges the reader not so much to agree or disagree with his ideas, but to grow within himself.

It is precisely as Elie Wiesel stated: "Auschwitz has pointed the way to the messianism of the unredeemed! Somewhere, I have seen that when mind and strength have gone, gratitude and mutual tenderness still live on in the heart of man".

Part 2

Personal History

CHAPTER 1: BETWEEN THE YEARS 1922-1924

I was born on July 10, 1921 to a religious Jewish family, the middle of eight children. We were three girls and five boys. Two weeks after my birth, my parents decided to move from Czechoslovakia to Petrosan, Hungary.

It was there that, one day, my mother told my father, "I tell you, he is ready to begin class, in cheder."

"Woman, I tell you that he is too young," was my father's reply.

"You should only hear the questions he's asking me. My boy is ready. Our daughter is too grown up to play with him. You know I'm pregnant with another child and I have no strength for Berele (Bela). Listen to me. He needs to be with other children."

"The answer, woman, is still NO!" My father insisted.

The following morning he took my hand with a firm grip, and didn't let go until we reached the building next to our home where the "cheder" held its classes and where the Temple was. My father spoke to the Rabbi with authority and firmness so that he could not be misunderstood.

"My son will be coming to class!" He said, "But you don't have to teach him! Just let him observe and play with the other kids."

And so at the age of three, I started school. Up until this point, I had never anticipated the type of responsibility this would involve. Now, not only did I have to respect my elders, but I had to do it with a smattering of exciting new boys and girls around me everywhere. At this tender age, I was not only suddenly expected to watch after myself and behave, but also make a good impression with my classmates. So, when the following day's new opportunities included playing "slide down the small hill on your butt" (this was back when the idea of metal slides was too fantastic a notion in Hungary) I eagerly volunteered to play.

As I started to get the hang of it, I began to notice the seat of my pants slowly rip away. Understanding the consequences, and yet unable to withstand the temptation of the hill, I continued on and on sliding, until the back of my pants was like a windsock flapping behind me. It was only when I landed at the bottom of the hill, looked up with a giddy grin on my pasty young face and noticed my father, off work, coming to check on me that I fully grasped the seriousness of my negligence. Standing before me with his arms folded, a silhouette in the afternoon sun, he looked as if a hulking mountain of judgement, and the grin faded away, into absolute terror.

In my life, my father would forgive me three times. This was the first time. As I stood before him, staring at the ground in shame, I heard him chuckle and looked up at his face to see a big loving smile.

"Will you not spank me, father?" I asked with a trembling voice.

He shook his head and replied, "No."

"But my tush is visible," I murmured. "Will mother spank me?"

He shook his head again and patted me on the head. "Don't worry, it's nothing. I tell you what; I'll sew the strongest piece of leather I have at the shop over the spot. It will be better than before." At this moment, I learned the power of forgiveness. It was a power my father did not exercise often, but for the moment, he was my hero. I was so elated, I ran back to play, unmindful of the fact that I was mooning the entire world as I ran to and fro.

MY LOVING FATHER

A man who made his money repairing windows in the houses and shops in Satmar. He would walk up and down the streets, long panes of many different colors of glass upon his back, shouting:

"Window repair! I fix windows! Window repair!"

Occasionally someone would stop him in the street, asking him to repair glass broken by drunken men or carefree children, and he would set his glass down, cut a piece to fix the damage, and be on his way (a little lighter and a lot richer). At my request, he allowed me to take some of the scraps he left behind, sometimes whole strips of beautiful glass. I would crack these into tiny pieces, and with glue, cardboard, and scrap metal, handcrafted kaleidoscopes for sale. I had never seen one up until this point, but the idea simply occurred to me. Every little bit helped.

At this point I became old enough that the responsibility of taking my lunch to my father was placed upon me. The walk was marginally far, so I passed the time by creating my own "hoop-and-stick." Since my left hand was occupied by Father's lunch, in my right hand I held a rigid stick with a six-penny nail atop it. The nail on the stick propelled a metal ring I'd taken from a wine barrel that was roughly three feet in diameter. Running down the street with this contraption, I cleared all the pedestrians out of my path with the clickety-clackety clamor it made. In fact, there was only one stop I ever made on the way to my father's shop.

Halfway to his shop stood a child's absolute dream—a candy shop on a rolling cart, filled with licorice, gum drops, and tosca chocolate. Each day I would stop, mesmerized by the tantalizing smell of the candy.

One can imagine my surprise when one day, passing by the cart, I dared to tell the candy man I liked his cart. To my amazement, he handed me a piece of chocolate and replied "Thanks," with a smile. The next day, as I walked by, I complemented him again. Once again, another candy! It seemed I could have all the candy I wanted so long as I paid the man a compliment. It was like rubbing a magic lamp with an infinitely patient genie inside. Only later did I find out that this candy man and my father had an arrangement where my father paid my monthly bill!

Cheder was all Petrosan had to offer for schooling, and was not considered "formalized." With a combination of regular school lessons, Jewish history, and Bible study, children were educated to become well-rounded young men. In the Jewish faith, our history is incorporated into every aspect of our lives. For example, once a year we celebrated a holiday called "Lag Ba'omer," which represented a time long past when the Jews incited a revolution against Rome. For the most part, every battle was an absolute slaughter of the Jewish rebellion, but it is believed that Lag Batomer represents a day of victory or respite from the onslaught. Amongst the things I picked up while still under orders by my father to "not be taught anything," was that the day of Lag Ba'omer was like a nirvana for young schoolboys. The day the highly publicized event was to take place, all my classmates started acting peculiar. I saw all the students looking out the windows of the classroom, day-dreaming and not paying attention. Having not been involved with it before, though, I went about my day like normal, standing up when called upon to announce that the stork had brought my family another baby. I didn't understand the ensuing giggles in response to my announcement, but quickly sat down, embarrassed.

Finally, the teacher dismissed us for Lag Ba'tomer, and amid the swirling hurricane of students rushing outside, I still pondered the unexpected response of my classmates. Outside, the children were collecting twigs and branches that would fit the rubber tubes they had bought in preparation for the archery games. Suddenly, one of the children, a younger, modern Rabbi's son came and sat me down in the grass. He explained the facts of life to me so gently and completely that I felt a sudden sense of enlightenment I had never experienced before. I wondered then if that was the type of "learning" my father feared I would come across in cheder; but mostly I was relieved to finally learn what all that giggling was about. That day would forever stick out in my head as one of the best days of my life; after our bows were assembled we all tread up to the top of what seemed a huge mountain to complete the merriment of our holiday.

Father was a tailor, and made a decent living of it in Petrosan. Though his workshop was the downstairs of a building he shared with his brother, these were all the businessmen had in common. While my father always employed between fifteen to twenty young ladies (which were the objects of my first young heart's desire) as well as a handful of skilled men, my repugnant uncle preferred to shrewdly run his shoe repair business alone, without the faith or the means to invest in hired help. In fact, I don't recall my uncle ever being a warm man, and a hard-earned day's pay was his only bedfellow. The only time I can clearly recall us spending any time together was once, when he set me down to explain the ease with which thick leather can be cut, if taken at the right angle. Wordlessly he would pinch the leather between his knees, and cut like butter the patterns for soles. Had he conducted his life-style in such an effortless and logical way, perhaps he would have been able to share the expenses with my father—and perhaps I would have seen him as something other than a grumpy old miser. Father was constantly arguing with him, and he probably resented the fact that father, being the only contributor for their bills, had a certain power over him. This power delighted my father.

This was how I learned almost everything in my early years--from the tailoring handiwork in my father's workshop, and the world around me. By the age of seven I felt myself a master of button and needle, and I was even allowed sew

buttons on my own pants. I always executed this tailoring exactly the way I was taught—all the way down to remembering the old wives' tale that to start sewing without at least a small piece of thread in one's mouth is asking for sickness or the evil eve...But soon, I realized that the only way I could become a talented seamster like the men in my father's workshop was to learn how to use "*the Singer sewing machine*." At first, these powerful contraptions terrified me, the whirring motors vibrating the tables they sat on, the unforgiving foot pedals, everything down to the "Singer" icon emblazoned in red on the side of each machine. With time, however, and a little impatience, I decided it was time to become a man. At first, the process seemed simple—run the fabric through while pumping the sewing machine's pedal. But my sudden confidence quickly became inattentiveness, and I found my finger suddenly caught up to the cuticle within the machine, the needle piercing the nail with utter indifference. As blood began to flow out from the fresh wound onto my handiwork of buttons and thread I pulled my arm away, trying to free myself from the machine before anyone saw my foolish predicament. It would not budge. As the terrible contraption greedily held fast to me, tears of frustration and pain came to my eyes. It was then that one of the seamstresses cried out in distress, noticing my situation. As my father came to dismantle the machine, two women pulled on my arm, finally dislodging it. It was there as I held my bleeding hand and my father looked down at me in disappointment that I decided I would not to follow my father's footsteps; I would not become a tailor.

Father exemplified the model of a proud Jewish man. He felt that his work should exemplify his beliefs, and at any chance possible, glorified God through his work. Once Father met a Rabbi who was passing through Petrosan and brought him to our home. We loved his singing, his many kaftans, and his incredible stories. For the first time, I encountered a man who could entertain and teach at the same time, lessons of humility and respect. We were all thrilled when Father announced he was going to pay to move the Rabbi and his wife to Petrosan. Much of what father did in his business reflected biblical messages too. For example, when it came time to build a display case to take to market each week, he modeled it after the case the Jews carried the Torah in on their trek across the desert to freedom. The case, which also acted as a son of dressing chamber, was made of pure genius. Because my father and uncle had to transport it atop the bus they rented each week, it had to be easily assembled and taken apart. Four panels of lightweight wood interlocked with slides and pins to form the frame, while a canvas dropcloth draped over the top to provide privacy for his customers.

While I never felt comfortable with my uncle, his wife always received me with great love. Aunt Liebe would always give me these tremendous embraces with her mountainous arms, and compliment my looks, especially my dark black eyes. They used to affectionately call me their little "gypsy boy," which never failed to embarrass me. She was always smoothing things out between our families; problems caused by the petty quarrels my uncle and father engaged in. Since their daughter was about my age, she felt that if we played together, it might bring the family closer. For the most part, we always had fun together, playing in the streets, or on the overpass near the railroad yard. Each track changer had a different color to it. When we stood on the overpass, high above the tracks, all kinds of trains zoomed underneath, and the different shades of blues, reds, and greens made a

most breathtaking panorama.

Back then, children weren't really considered during major decisions, a fact which I soon discovered in the form of a huge open truck that parked outside our house one Saturday evening. With no warning at all, my entire family began unloading all our possessions onto this mysterious vehicle. Unknowing of where it was taking us, I boarded with my mother and father into the back of the truck. When I woke, my father took my hand and told me, "Berele, we are here. Look at our new home." He pointed to a large many-windowed home, behind which a smaller house sat. We began to unload our things into the larger of the two, and my uncle's family did the same into the smaller. So, my young, overzealous cousin's premonition we would move became true, but not that we would part eternally. We had relocated to Satmar—once again, my father had chosen the path for us that best represented his beliefs, for this particular street was an entirely Jewish community. For the most part, this was religiously the best decision, but we would all suffer from it. The people in Satmar were, for the most part, more sophisticated than those in Petrosan, and were not interested in my father's ability to manufacture drab, stuffy suits and dresses. There was a great demand, with our entire community consisting of Jews, for the long, flowing kaftans my father did not have the skill to produce. Soon, we found our family impoverished from our move, suddenly going without the things we took for granted.

I recall one Shabbat we didn't have a single thing to eat in the house, and I decided to try to help. As a child my friends and I always played a game called "button soccer." For flicking purposes, it was easiest when the buttons were sanded to angles on their sides—which revealed the secret to their construction. Buttons, it seems, are held together by a thin layer of tar; it was that tar I formed my plan. The most difficult part of my plan was scaling the rickety ladder that led to our immense roof. Finally, I got up the courage to climb it, and set my trap. With the tar I had taken from the buttons, I spread a layer on a piece of wood near some tiles with a little flour nearby. This attracted some nearby pigeons, whose mild cooing became frenzied and confused as they realized their feet were stuck to the hot tar in the midday sun.

When I presented the gift of the two pigeons to my mother, she was completely aghast.

"Berele! Where did you get these?" She looked disdainfully at the pigeons, still alive and flapping.

I began to explain the entire operation to her, but she stopped me when I got to the part about the roof.

"The roof! You could have fallen down on the asphalt! It is a miracle you are alive and have not broken your arms or legs!"

Eventually, though, she forgave me, and we ate roast pigeon that Friday for Shabbat.

My mother was a fantastic cook—I remember one occasion, she made cheesecake for dessert one supper.

I peered into the scalding hot dish as she placed them on the counter to cool. I could almost taste the creamy sweetness as I stood before them.

"Now, Berele," mother chided, "you must let them cool first before you eat

them. You could burn your mouth! Then you would not taste anything at all." She chuckled as she left the kitchen, leaving me alone to contemplate the cheesecake myself.

The temptation got the better of me. I retrieved a knife from our silverware drawer and began to cut myself a piece, ever-so-slightly, from the side of the pan. Slowly, I cut through the crumbly crust, delicately making my crime look as neat as possible. Mother suddenly burst through the doorway. I turned in shock, accidentally putting the sharp blade to the side of my finger, slicing through with the very same edge I had just put through the cake, which seemed a million miles away from me.

"Berele!" My poor mother cried out, as blood began to spout all over the cheesecake, and the pan.

Thinking she was angry with me, and afraid of her punishment, I ran from the house, out into the night, holding my bludgeoned finger which trailed blood behind me. Mother cried for me to stop and let her inspect the wound, but I ran as fast as my tiny legs would take me, in shock, ashamed. Finally, out of breath, she staggered to a stop and cried "Go back to the gypsies, little gypsy boy!" She was trying to let me know she was not angry with me, by using this affectionate term. Unfortunately, I took it the wrong way, thinking she was through with me, and that I would be a homeless beggar from now on. I sat down on the sidewalk, and remained there until my father, coming home from work, saw me sitting on the sidewalk, holding my wound.

"Berele, what has happened?" He asked, with legitimate concern.

I was too upset over what Mother had said to even think of my injury. "Imagine, Daddy," I sniffed, "after all these years living in your house and now your wife wants to send me away to the gypsies!"

He took my hand, and led me back home, where he crawled up that rickety ladder and got me a bandage. He tourniquetted my finger, and told me it would be all right. This was the second time.

CHAPTER 3: A SINGING PRODIGY

The learning was hardly stimulating or even interactive, however, and mostly consisted of robot-like repetition. Like a mantra, everything was repeated over and over, until we gave the effect that we had retained something. Back then, most every child's intention was to learn the Thalmud by repetition, and the enacting of the Bar Mitzvah ceremony was used as a sort of graduation. The Thalmud, filled with pages of unstimulating doggerel for the most part, is the length of a short novel, and consists of arguments by holy men from long ago. Albeit seemingly pointless, for the most part, the ceremony was highly respected, and the young men who passed through it the same. After that, most boys took on apprenticeships, and some went on to Yeshivot, which was the Hungarian version of high school.

Not only was the curriculum incredibly boring, the teacher was a huge fireball of a man with no tolerance whatsoever for insolence from my classmates. He had a long red beard that framed an eternal grimace on his face, and a bullwhip which he commanded his respect with. Although most of the time, he would only crack it like thunder on the tables nearby, some of the children's parents actually gave him full rights to brandish it upon their backs if they did not behave. My mother was far too loving to allow that for me, and the most interaction I had with him was bringing him our cow's milk in the morning as our daily payment for education. Most of us were far too frightened of him to act up in class anyway, but any chance we got to get back at him we took advantage of. One particularly hot summer afternoon, for example, our teacher fell asleep on his table, leaving himself wide open for attack. The bravest boy in the room spread wood glue on his beard as he slept, and when he woke up, outraged, he gave a customary snap of the whip, inadvertently ripping off a large section of his beard. The best lesson he taught me is that to rule by fear is not ruling at all.

At home on Shabbat, which is the Saturday of rest in the Jewish faith, I used to look forward to my older brother coming home so we could sing Zemirot. Zemirot are joyful songs of faith, with lots of little trills and scales that I loved to sing. Each week we would sit on the front steps and daven these pretty songs for the whole block to hear, and one Saturday, a strange visitor approached us and singled me out.

"Your voice, it is fantastic!" He told me,

"You could make a good deal of money with a voice like that!"

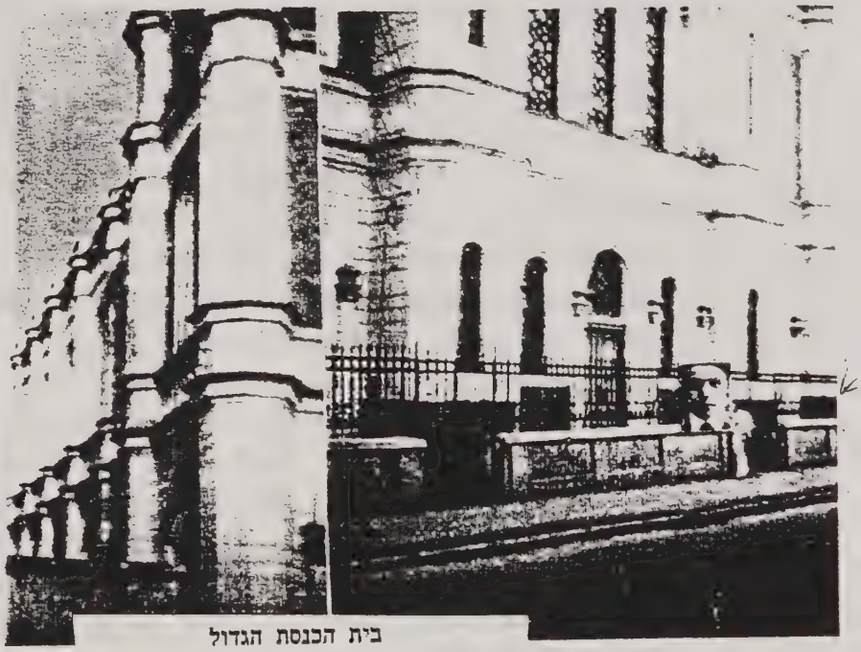
And at that, he told me his name, Rivel, and it turned out he was a big shot Cantor at the most reknowned Temple in Satmar.

The next Shabbat, I went to the Temple and saw Cantor Rivel again. He was pleased to see I had chosen to take his advice, and also to have what he felt might be the most naturally talented singer he had seen.

Within weeks, under his training, I went from a mild curiosity at age nine to a story of interest, and finally the star of Satmar, a sensation. I was still under four feet tall, and they had to stand me up on the marble stairs of the pulpit so the audience could see me perform. Although to do such a thing was almost unheard of, many of the onlookers came from miles away to hear me daven, and caused a ruckus when my short stature kept them from getting a good look at me.

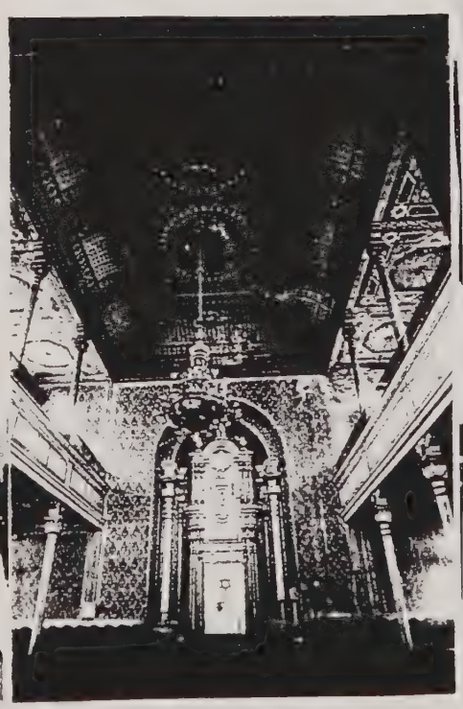
Suddenly I saw all my problems disappear. I was the center of everyone's attention; wherever I went, people began to whisper, and smile at me, occasionally pointing at me for the benefit of their companions. Because I had endured the anxiety of having to make any money I could for fear I would have nothing to eat at night, the pressure of performing in front of highly demanding crowds was nothing. Each week, I would add another prayer to my repertoire: some traditional, some modern, some very difficult, and some that were simple enough for my audience to join me in. I wrote down each song, best I could, to remember my steadily-growing list, which contained songs in Yiddish, Hebrew, and Hungarian, German and even Romanian. Soon I found out people had heard of my difficult home life, and started finding money slipped into my pants pockets. People I didn't know would stop me in the street and insist I come have supper at their homes, after which a customary song or two would lighten their hearts. Everything seemed suddenly prepared for me, as Cantor Rivel began training me to one day become a worldwide sensation. He would be my impresario, I his student, and with fame and money I could take care of my family, which was suffering from my father's dwindling income. Soon the newspapers began predicting the same thing—I would be a star, living in a mansion in Hollywood, or a castle in France. They wrote that I was like a "Little Josef Schmidt," because our backgrounds were the same—he was a short man whose father was a tailor, and I the same. And when Mr. Hartman, the neighborhood bicycle shop owner, let me listen to his Josef Schmidt album, I realized what a compliment this was. He became an icon for me to follow, a model to mold myself after. It looked as if nothing could possibly stand in my way.

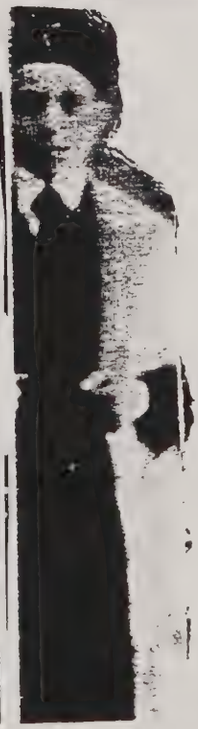
I was twenty years old when I came home from Budapest to Satmar, for a visit to finish fixing up Dad's teeth. (for the second time.) Dad was 52 (I asked him). I never saw him again. I started to learn dentistry as an apprentice in Satmar from Dr. Gorog dentistry and technology when I was fifteen years old. Then it was life... and the future.

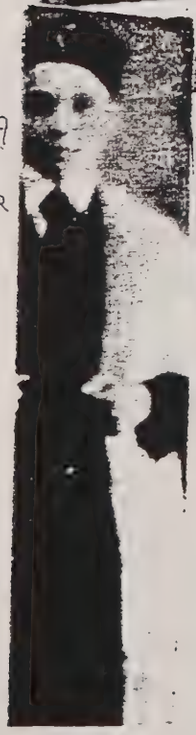


בית הכנסת הגדול
ברחוב ווארדומב בפנים

Satmar







A Várdomb utcai
Nagytemplom belseje

Mr. Hartman, a fine gentleman with a little beard, who owned the only bicycle store in Satu Mare, constantly urged me to borrow Jewish and Yiddish cantorial records from his enormous collection. He let me take them home and sometimes even let me borrow a small record player. I learned very quickly because I loved everything he had, from Yosele Rosenblatt, Hersman, Roitman, Kvartin and also some famous "couplet" writers in various languages.

My own Cantor, Cantor Rivel, wrote all my solos and all the choir music. He invited me to his house and offered to write some interesting numbers for my voice and some duets for the two of us to sing together while he played the piano. On any weekday when I had time to spare, I studied and learned his compositions with the thought that when he and I were ready, we would go on tour and make money. I was very enthusiastic about this plan and our collaboration went extremely well. Later on I made a serious mistake. I told my parents that he was too modern and that I was not too excited about some of his compositions.

"What do you need Cantor Rivel for?" My father asked, "We two, you and I will travel together."

"You... an impresario?" I questioned, for he had caught me by surprise (Cantor Rivel had familiarized me with the word impresario when we discussed our trip and I also knew it from my experience with the famous Sidi Tal).

While my father talked and expanded on his plan for us, my sister Malka looked at him and asked him what he knew about this type of business. Mother was only aware of the fact that our financial situation was desperate and that we needed a miracle. Father had moved us for religious reasons. Unfortunately, his tailoring skills, so well rewarded in Petrosan, were not good enough for Satu Mare.

In spite of the objections, a few nights later we were smuggled over the border to Czechoslovakia. The following day we arrived, unannounced and late at night, at the home of one of my father's relatives. By then he and I were both shivering from the cold and I could hardly keep my eyes open. Suddenly, I felt the warmth of a fire coming from a small cast iron stove. I saw my father take butter from a grape leaf and put it on baked potatoes which he removed from the coals. The delicious flavor of that meal has remained in the memory of my taste buds forever.

In Czechoslovakia and Hungary, my concerts were in one or another of the Zionist organizations' largest halls, and we never had to pay for these accommodations. In Romania, the concerts were always in the most beautiful Synagogues. They were built in a circular fashion with a dome on top. There were fascinating hand painted murals with biblical scenes depicted on their western wall. The seats were in the round and I stood and sang in the middle. The atmosphere was invariably most enthusiastic. In the Romanian Synagogues father had to pay only for the usage of the light.

The Jewish boys and girls in all these places were extremely warm and friendly toward me. They constantly dragged me to the Zionist organizations' events. I was most impressed with their culture, efficiency, and friendliness toward each other. All the older boys had steady, good-looking girl friends.

We met with Shalom Katz in Bucharest in the Temple Choral. He heard my concert there and he was already engaged to do their High Holidays. Around that time a big national event occurred. I believe that it was when King George of Romania was giving his power over to his son. A lot of people came to attend the occasion and so did my brother, Josef Mayere. King George's son was much beloved by the people and he promised to take Satu Mare and all of Transylvania from Hungary. While he spoke, a large podium collapsed and many people were killed.

I ran from Temple to Temple. Everywhere Cantors were saying El Mole. Sure enough I found my brother and we fell into each other's arms. I was very happy that he was alive. I took him to the Temple Choral. We met our father there, and for the first time I heard Shalom Katz daven (sing) the weekly Maariv. He was fantastic with the El Mole Rachamim! When we left for Satu Mare he suggested that we make big posters for us (he and I) as two brothers. I liked him a lot and we always had a lot of fun. We were standing in the home of the main Shochet when he made the suggestion.

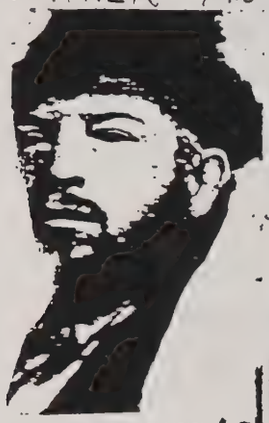
We traveled together, he, my father, and I for ten months. Shalom liked to play tricks and surprises during our joint concerts. He invariably started up by davening Maariv. He always got a fixed amount from the Temple budget and handled all the advertising and tickets.

If it should seem that my quotation from Elie Weisel is more in cantence than from others, then in my behalf should stand the fact that Elie Weisel from his childhood on lived in a close distance to my city. His town was called Signet, and mine was Satmar. Both cities where our strict Jewish deep-rooted education were totally identical! Before more about Elie Weisel, first more about Satmar.

בית הכנסת הגדול
ברחוב ווארדומב בפנים

A Várdomb utcai
Nagytemplom belseje

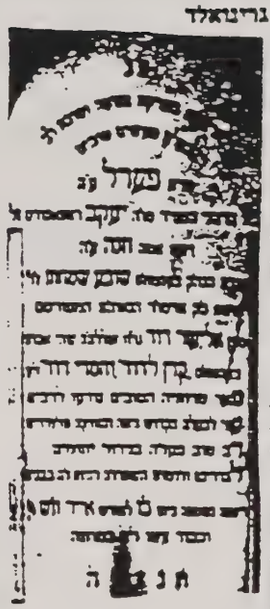
MAY FATHER



לוח זכרון לקדושי קהלות הקודש סאטמאר

ולציון יאמר: 'איש' ואיש ילד בה (תהלים פ"ז ה')
כל אחד ואחד מישראל אף על פי שנולד בארצות
אחרות הריהו כאילו נולד בה

קברי הרה"ג הצ' ר' אליעזר דוד גרינוואלד



NUSZEN PINKÁS
Hűséges feleségével
Judit (szül. Katz),
nyolc gyermeket
(5 fiu és 3 leány)
a helyes útra neveltek
Gyer. Slomo Jichok —
– felesége Eszter

négy gyermekkel, Málká — férje Deutsch Joszéf
és fiuk, továbbá Majse Jákev. Mindnyájan a
szülőkkel együtt pusztultak el Auschwitzban 5704
Sziván 10-én. Emlékeznek reájuk kegyelettel gyer-
mekeik: Joszéf, Jolán Rosenzweig és Alex Brock-
ban. Béla Kaliforniában és Helén Johansohn

They were gone... only a few have returned. The calendar for the winter of 1944 was written, and then a normal April and then May, which is always miraculously beautiful in the sequences of every calendar, followed. This third nice spring month, however, was not for us. This was for the twentieth century "Amelech"- Nazis, German and Hungarian, and for all the others who with laughter, full of jealous hatred, bloodthirsty and hypocritical about Jews, with their well-organized ways of killing in fire, burning six million innocent adults and children for one reason only: because they were born Jews. Why and where can I know at least to have a place to remember my parents and those precious brothers and sister?

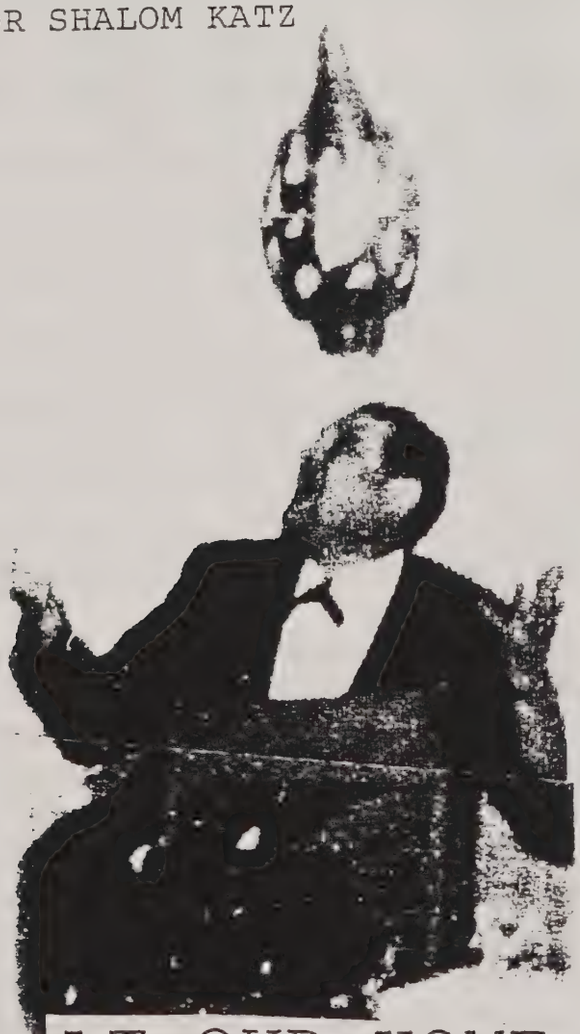
Once my father and I in Central Europe concert touring I was eight, nine years old; Cantor Shalom Katz came up to talk to me and to my father and suggested to make many more concerts and join me! On a large poster our two pictures stating us as two brothers..he was right! The tickets were here with the price. Well, I had the best time of my life! So did everybody else!

With the war breaking out we lost contact. In 1967 Madeleine and I lived in Miami Beach, Florida. Suddenly an announcement was that Cantor Shalom Katz will give a concert in Miami.

We went to the train to receive him and his wife. Not one of us knew if any of us survived the war. His wife said that she never seen him in her life to cry and happy for me also to have survived the war! We arranged for a nice reception at our home for everybody and all the Cantors.

President Kennedy used to go to Cantor Shalom Temple in Washington to listen to his incredibly beautiful tenor voice and his interpretation of the Hebrew text.

CANTOR SHALOM KATZ



AT OUR HOME,
biggest lightning rod
1997

Nothing, of course, except my own father. To watch me succeed in this manner at twelve years old, when he was failing so...destroyed his pride. My mother never attended the Temple I soloed at out of embarrassment. She would listen to me outside the Temple, wrapped in her kerchief, her tattered dress flapping in the cold wind, ashamed to enter for the simple fact that she had nothing presentable to wear. My father, on the other hand, never heard me perform out of jealousy. He was absolutely sure that Cantor Rivel was trying to take me away from him, and would not allow it.

"Berele," he told me one day, "you no long need Cantor Rivel. We two will travel together, you and I."

"You..." I questioned, "an impresario?" I was extremely doubtful of this, as well as my sister Malda, who was completely confounded at the very notion of it.

This was a complete shock to me. We had no way of travel save our own two feet. But my father was absolutely adamant, and began making plans to smuggle ourselves into Czechoslovakia. My mother, along with being far too passive to interfere with his plans, thought that it might not be such a bad idea—in fact, it might be the idea that became our salvation, a miracle.

And thus, against severe objections by myself and the others who felt I needed more training before I started my career on the road, we left under cover of night for the five-hour trek to Czechoslovakia, where several of our family members lived. It was the middle of a fierce Hungarian winter, and neither of us were properly clothed to be travelling on foot. By the time our mystified eyes saw the light from the small house we had set out from, we were both near delirium. We hadn't said more than five words to one another the entire trip, and it was nearly dawn. The only respite seemed our shelter beyond, and that turned out to be no more than a barn with minimal guard from the icy winds. Finally we saw something to be hopeful from: a coal stove inside the barn that was filled with piping hot embers. On the embers my father threw what would be our first food since we left Hungary, several potatoes. Soon they were cooked through, and he even had some churned butter fresh from a grape leaf to spread on them. This will eternally stick out as the finest meal of my entire life.

In the morning, we arrived at my first location, a large Zionist hall. Most exciting was the way in which the children received me. When they heard where I had come from, and how, at such a young age, already I was on a tour of sorts, they all became fascinated. The young Zion boys and girls immediately began dragging me to Zionist organized events, most of which were communist oriented. The Zionists were in such a poor state of affairs, and had so little to look forward to for the future that Socialism seemed their only hope for survival. Back then Communism was still in its theoretical state, and Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto had just reached popularity. My father warned me not to become involved with it, though, because of its militaristic implications. We never had to pay for the use of the halls in Czechoslovakia, since my reputation preceded me, and everyone was enthused to listen to my singing. This is why it disgraced me even more to see my father's behavior the first night I performed.

Although he had no idea, I had, several times snuck out to see films at the movie theatre while father napped on Saturday afternoons. To me, the organization of the ticket sales, the posters and advertisements, and the sheer pageantry of it all was magnificent. That was how I had always dreamed people would come to see me. Instead, as I stood up on stage and my new friends and townspeople came in to watch me perform, he stuck out his calloused, rough hand at them, implying that they give 'something' for the privilege to watch me perform. It was terribly embarrassing, but I could not avoid it; my father ran the show and I performed. That was how it was.

We travelled for ten months that way, getting around however we could. From Czechoslovakia to Romania I performed at any concert hall I could, while my father made as much money as he could. Eventually we ended up in Bucharest, around the time that King George was giving power to his son. This was especially exciting for me because my older brother, Josef Mayere was there to celebrate the occasion. The enthusiastic crowd of thousands cheered as King George's son fervently proclaimed he would take Satmar and all of Transylvania from Hungary. The crowd, excited beyond words for the fact that such a powerful man should represent their future, suddenly broke into a frenzied panic as one of the main podiums collapsed, crushing and killing dozens of people. Amid the havoc, I struggled to free myself and find my brother, who I was separated from. Temple to Temple, Cantors everywhere were singing El Mole, a solemn death dirge, which only elevated my concern further. Finally I found my brother, amid a sea of people, looking for me, and we went to find solace in a nearby Temple, the Temple Choral. At this particular Temple, a man was Cantering the El Mole Rachamim fabulously. His name was Shalom Katz, he had heard me perform. We decided together it would be beneficial for us both to perform together in the Temples. He had already been scheduled for the High Holidays, and got a fixed amount from the Temples to perform. What mattered most to him, anyhow, was not money, but companionship—not necessarily mine. He was very passionate in his love for girls, especially the Romanian women. So we performed together for some time, sometimes davening up in an almost improvisational fashion. But, in the end, he attained a position in Bucovina, and we parted ways.

Since the High Holidays were upcoming, Father and I had to return home, but not before a very crucial event happened. While in Romania, after a performance, I was on my way out of the Synagogue when my icon Josef Schmidt came out from nowhere to compliment my work. He told me he had some very important matters to discuss with me, and gave me the address at his hotel. After begging Father, he agreed to allow me to go and visit.

When we walked in his room, I was struck by the profundity of the situation. My hero had invited me, because he wished to speak with me. My father walked in right after me, and I introduced the two. As my father reached out his hand to shake, Josef Schmidt suddenly grabbed him by the beard and began screaming at him, completely enraged!

"Look what you're doing to this young boy!" He cried. "His voice is not mature enough to take the abuse of singing night after night. You must cease this nonsense at once, and get him into a Conservatorium, where he can study!"

He then proceeded to tell my father exactly what instruments I would be allowed to play (namely not the violin, because it can constrict the vocal chords) and how he could not be allowed to take advantage of my gift any longer.

Of course, the entire event only left my father more sure that he was correct, and that Josef Schmidt was a dangerous lunatic. My father would never admit that he was wrong--I knew Mr. Schmidt was correct, because I had recently felt a change in my voice. Puberty, combined with the strain of performing too often, was likely to ruin my voice irreconcilably. Everyone agreed that what my father was forcing me to do was madness. But my singing was our only income now, and there was no time to consider my feelings on the matter.

The final straw came in Prague, as I sang the opening section of Yosele Rosenblatt's most difficult and most famous recitative "Achenu kol bet Israel omdim teen hayom uben bechaboso." Toward the end, the composition jumps exactly an octave and a half into "kopf stimme" or falsetto, Cantor Yosele Rosenblatt was able to do it, but I had never heard another Cantor try to imitate him. This had always been my first selection. I loved to hit the audience with it to judge from their reaction the sort of crowd I would have on any given evening.

For the first time ever, I tried to reach that pitch, and could not. My voice, the one thing that had remained a source of solidarity within me through it all, had failed me for the first time.

I apologized to the audience and announced that I would never sing in public again. My father, shocked at my insolence, stood at the door still, and as I pointed in his direction, my outstretched arm trembling, I told them he would return them all their money. Not a single person did, for they pitied me so. They saw what all the experienced Cantors, my mother and my family had seen all along. He had twisted me and manipulated me until I finally snapped; a delicate flower trampled and ruined.

The entire way home, we did not speak. In my father's eyes I saw no disappointment, no rage, only shame. He had heard the warnings—for a Cantor, going through puberty is like a rite of passage. All of a sudden, the falsetto notes become more difficult to reach and the range goes below the register of the required pitch. These are facts my father chose to ignore, and I was forced to overlook. In a way, that night brought me freedom from life as my father's prize caged bird. But the applause faded away, and the silence of alienation took its place.

Unvergessener

JOSEPH SCHMIDT

Orchester der Städtischen Oper Berlin

Abschied von der Mutter (Mutter, (
aus „Cavalleria rusticana" (Mascagni)

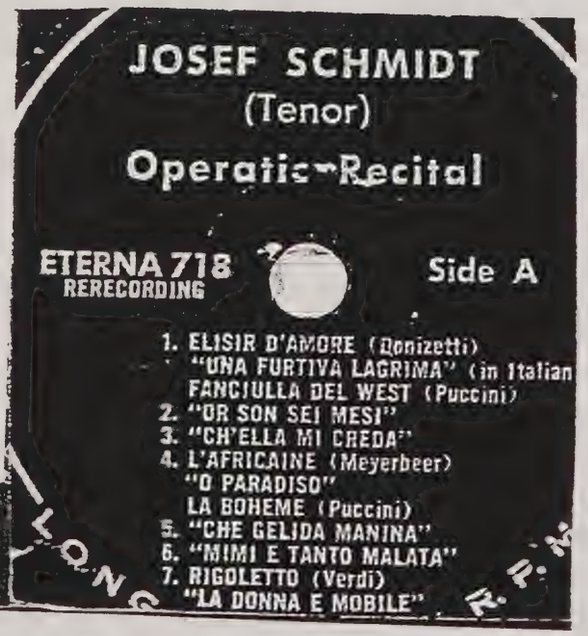
Heimlich aus ihrem Auge, aus „De

Von Apfelblüten einen Kranz, aus
(Lehár - Herzer - Löhner)

Immer nur lächeln, aus „Das Land (
(Lehár - Herzer - Löhner)

Wer hat die Liebe uns ins Herz g
aus „Das Land des Lächelns" (Lehár

Dein ist mein ganzes Herz, aus „D
(Lehár - Herzer - Löhner)



CHAPTER 4: A RETURN TO SATMAR-CHILDHOOD

When we returned to Satmar, I felt miserable and ashamed, as if awaking from a perfect dream to find myself reduced to human size. Their looks of pity seemed to be glares of persecution. Their words of sadness seemed to be accusations of quitting. I was utterly drained, stuck between being unable to go back to my life before singing but unable to move forward to a life of success. The newspaper articles from years past proclaiming me Satmar's hope for the future stood as a mocking remark of the life I could have had. Now I would never make my family rich, or live in Hollywood. I didn't even know what Hollywood was—just sounded like a place for winners.

My father, ever unsympathetic and remorseless, came up with a new plan for me. He began to tell me that the romantic notion of being a Cantor was far too goyishe, like a gentile. He decided I would go to Yeshiva and become a Shochet, to serve my God in humble respect. Never did he ask what I wanted to do with my life now that the life I had dreamed of, and been so close to was beyond my grasp. I loved animals! I could never pluck a feather from a chicken, much less slit the neck of harmless cow. When my father began suggesting this for me to look forward to, I first went back to our barn, where we kept our chickens. These chickens I loved as pets. I could never harm them.

"Is this what I deserve?" I asked my father. "I always gave you and the family the money I made singing at the big Temple, and from all the weddings and singing at Chanukah and from the concerts and half the continent. After all this, why should I have to go live in Nagy Karoj, a little known, dusty village, and again belabor over the Talmud? " My Bar Mitzvah, I had spent months studying by candlelight the tribulations of the Talmud. I had recited it by heart, made the passage of manhood, and my father had ignored me. I couldn't even go to Temple on my Bar Mitzvah because we hadn't enough money to get my shoes out of the repair shop. Not once had I heard a word of praise—so what will it serve to study further, I wondered? And when I had decided to attend Communist Zionist meetings while Father napped the Saturday of Shabbat, and he had found out, he had administered a beating of ferocity which I can not possibly describe. In doing his bidding, I was overlooked, and in going against him, I was beaten. There was no hope of saving my soul to him.

My father remained adamant. He was determined to break my will, and with the only thing holding me to my dream of one day becoming a famous Cantor was the booklet I still had which now contained all my song lists in all five languages, all my newspaper clippings, and other momentous from my past. In Bucharest, I had a leathersmith put a warm leather binding on it, which I was forced to give in and go to the Yeshiva in Nagy Karoj with a Jewish man who traveled from Satu Mare to Krule (Nagy Karoj) to the weekly market. He left Satu Mare early every Wednesday morning with his horse and buggy packed high with straw baskets. On Wednesday, I sat high up on the baskets so that he couldn't see me or talk to me. We traveled all day Wednesday and all that night I didn't sleep a wink and I cried my eyes out. Still, I managed to be fascinated by the sky's incredible scenery and the stars mesmerized me. I had a lot to think about.

I asked myself, "Where does God live? Does God know and keep count of every tree, every leaf from each tree? And does he know when it will fall down? From where does my father's bad temper come? And how come mother is the complete opposite, so calm and totally tinselfish?"

Then I cried some more and while I did, I sang to myself "Eli, eli lama asaftoni?"

It was something I had always liked to do, even when I was younger and had my new tefillin on my head. I usually had done that late in the morning when I was alone in schul. I used to be very careful not to leave out a word or even a syllable and I sung loudly since no one else was there. I felt that I was talking to God confidentially, that He was up there, on my right side, on the ceiling. I felt good after that because my God was my good friend.

Was I feeling too sorry for myself? Maybe. But then, nobody else did. I recalled how I could not go to the Temple on Shabbat and read from the Torah on my Bar Mitzvah, because we didn't have the money to retrieve my shoes from the shoe repair shop. I had cried in vain then too and when, toward the evening's darkness, I finally did go to Schul for the Shillah Shides, nobody saw what I wore on my feet. I had to say my very long Bar Mitzvah Dvar Torah in total darkness. After that I had rushed back home and entered an extra little room which was finished with black earth pounded down by hand over dried out clay. My friend Yoska and some other friends arrived with delicious "Tosca" chocolate and I sang some of my solos from memory, and finally we all sang loudly together.

I asked myself "Was this my reward for the years of studying and memorizing? Was this for my future?"

We arrived in Nagy Karoj on Thursday morning, in time for the market. I don't know how I found my way on foot to the Jewish place. I became worn with my travels, and fit snugly in my favorite coat pocket. I remember passing over my name, which was embossed within the leather, over and over, as I made my plans for the future. I would leaf through it some nights, reliving the joy of performing, the rush of a thousand hands clapping together for me, the excitement of holding out my arms to soak it all in under the blinding stage lights.

I came to find out one day that Father had torn the book apart. He had ripped out the binding, shredded the pages, and disposed of the remains where they would never be seen again. This was his final effort in regaining control over me. Unable to face him in rage I had never known before, I ran to the marketplace, tears streaming through my eyes, but could not run fast enough to escape my misery. On the wall of the marketplace I began to scrawl over and over again words of hatred: "I hate you father" was all I could think, and I only wished to be as far away from him as I could. And so I yielded.

Agreeing to go to Yeshiva in Nagy Karoj was my only escape. I decided I would rather be without comforts I desired than be terrified under the threat of my father's malice. The next Wednesday morning a man who carted straw baskets to the marketplace in Nagy Karoj allowed me passage among his cargo. The trip took all day and all night, and yet the abbrasiveness of the straw on my skin was not what kept me up all night; it was the weight of my father's heavy hand crushing my soul. The feeling of the cold wind rushing past me, freezing the fresh tears to my face, caused an almost transient state in me as I scanned the imponderable midnight sky. My thoughts melted into the cosmos, I thought aloud, a child of God.

I wondered, "God, where are you? Do you count every tree, every leaf from each tree? Do you know when each tree will fall down, or from where my father's temper comes? "

I cried aloud, like a whispering tea kettle, until my ribs ached and a song came to my lips. Quietly, so quietly singing, "Eli, eli lama asaftoni?"

This was my way of speaking to God. My voice, given to me from him, it must have been made so I might sing praise of him, confide in him. It was then I realized that, though my voice may someday fail me completely, God will always be there.

We arrived in Nagy Karoj on Thursday morning, in time for the market. I don't know how I found my way on foot to the Jewish place. I asked the gaby if he could tell the Rabbi that Pinhas Nussen's son had arrived and wanted to talk to him. When the Rabbi came out to see me, I asked the gaby if he could tell the Rabbi that Pinhas Nussen's son had arrived and wanted to talk to him. When the Rabbi came out to see me, he was dressed in a beautiful, silky, colorful kaftan and wore a spadik on his head, the likes of which I had never seen before. It was made of beautiful fur and was two or three times as wide as a regular strammel. His pants were of a different color and white stockings starting below the knee with black lacquer-like slippers completed his outfit.

The first thing he asked was, "How much money do you have?"

When I told him, I didn't like his facial expression.

"Do you have a valise here somewhere with you, besides this little package?" He continued.

"No," I replied.

"Wait right here a little. Don't go away!" He ordered and left.

A few minutes later someone else came out and took me to my new quarters.

"You'll sleep here in the attic, on the hay. Tomorrow you'll go to a family for your breakfast, lunch and supper. The next day you'll go to another family, and so on each day, until the Shabbat. That day you'll have your meals here with all the other bachurim."

From then on, my Monday eating place was with a family named Lakatos. Not only were they very well off, but what also impressed me very much was how educated and cultured they were. The husband was extremely respectful in his conversations with his wife. He used the old time Hungarian custom of addressing her as "Thou." He even lifted his hat at the sight of any young girl or woman. He and his wife had two daughters who were older than I. One of them had already graduated from college.

When this family learned that I could sing, they spent as much time as they could with me at their piano. They introduced me to all of the world's famous tenors, and I learned their arias and their songs from the movies. In particular I remember listening to Joseph Smith using his incredible voice to sing mostly in German, Hungary's second language. He was as short as I and during my concert tours I had been called the second Joseph Smith.

The two Lakatos daughters were impressed with how quickly I learned this famous music with only the piano to accompany me. They took the trouble to teach me to sing from below my waist rather than from the throat. They knew a lot of other tricks that improved my singing. One day, they lifted my black hat from my head, and hid my hanging "payot" behind my ears.

"Wouldn't he look good if he let his hair grow instead?" They giggled.

I found that my father had been right. My voice helped me to survive in Krole. I was always well fed, but I still slept under the roof on the hay and I had to manage my personal hygiene with the rest of the Yeshiva "bachurim". I pleaded in my letters home for money, but the answer was that I didn't need any, for soon I was bound to start singing with the Rabbi in schul and would earn plenty. It happened as my father said, but the earnings were slim because the people in Krule were not nearly as generous as those at home. Nevertheless, I managed to move in with a poor family and shared a small, dirty room with another poor student. The sheets and pillows were filthy and the rest of the hygiene wasn't any better. I reported it several times to my Rabbi, but he was annoyed with my problems and he complained that I did not attend to my studies enough. I had the feeling that he was furious with my father.

It was at that time that I saw a pair of shoes in a shop window that I stared at whenever I could, but I never dared enter the store. I did, however find a shoe repairman and asked him how much it would cost to repair the large holes in the soles of my shoes. He started to examine them, but he continually turned to glance furtively into his kitchen, obviously to make sure that his wife wasn't paying attention to what was going on in the store.

"I know who you are," he finally whispered, "I go to schul only when I know that you're singing. I've always wanted to talk to you. Be sure you come back very early tomorrow morning to pick up your shoes."

I did exactly as he had whispered, and when I entered the shop, he said, in a loud voice, "Don't give me any money! My wife is at the market shopping. Did you see her yesterday? Have you ever seen anyone uglier than that?"

I had to agree. He was right. I never had!

"I'm planning to get away from her and this dusty village. What do you think of that? I was an impresario once. I have lots of experience. I traveled a lot with a small group of artists. We all made lots of money! I heard from the other bachurim that your father doesn't send you a penny. What kind of a father is he? Listen, I have a plan all figured out for the two of us. We'll make lots of money by organizing advance publicity with big posters advertising your arrival. Well sell tickets before you get there and we'll be sold out, even before you begin the concert. That way you won't have to depend on what people decide to pay after they hear you, the way your father usually did. The only remaining question is whether or not you're man enough to go with me?"

The following Monday, I spoke to the Lakatos sisters and told them that I had decided to disappear to the "Tashnad" Yeshiva where I had many good friends from home and from the other cities I had sung in. I planned to tell these friends that I wanted to be a guest for a week to see if I wanted to join the Yeshiva. Then from there I would arrange for a concert hall and for a place for us to stay. After the concert we would move on to another city where we would have made the same

arrangements. We planned to repeat this procedure until we reached the port of Constanza where we would take a trip to Palestine, and there I would enroll in Tel Aviv's famous Conservatory.

The girls though this was an excellent plan. They knew my impresario well. His wife had a good dowry, but she had cancer and he had spent it all on her. They assured me that he would take good care of me. He would show me how to wear my hair and what clothes to wear. They both clung to me and kissed me on the forehead and promised they would not say one word to their parents.

"We don't know anything," they kept repeating.

All went as planned. The boys from the "Tashnad" Yeshiva gave me a very happy reception. My friends from home, all the same age as I, fought over where I should sleep my first night among them. I felt that I was in seventh heaven!

When I spoke to the Rabbi, he asked me to daven at the pulpit for the first week. Then he bent down to my ear and asked me in Hebrew, "Do you already have two black hairs?"

I had no idea of what he was talking about and looked to my friends for an explanation.

One of them scurried over to me and said in Hungarian, "He wants to know if you already have two black pubic hairs", and he quickly turned to the Rabbi and in the same pitch he said, "Yes, yes, he already has them. He's entitled to pray in a minyan!"

I had a great time. These boys were very different from the ones in Krole. They wore long payot, but dressed in good jackets or shirt sleeves, and they all wore neckties. Every afternoon we took empty milk cans to the farmers, and while we walked we sang loudly in Hungarian to well known melodies. However, we improvised the most vulgar rhymes about making love to the farmer's buxom daughters. Some of us had a HARD time walking...Sorry, that's all I can report from that heavenly place.

Finally the day came when I had to leave and meet my friend. He kept his promises and found us a fairly decent hotel, and provided me with a nice suit, and some shirts and neckties. After I took a bath, we went to a photographer where he took pictures of me in my small Tallit. The next day we finalized the hall for our "acappello" concert and arranged for the printing of publicity fliers.

Our audacity paid off. People were curious to see how a young boy could do all that beautiful singing all by himself, and they paid to hear me. We went from city to city in this fashion and slowly came nearer and nearer to Constanza.

In one small city, after the people shook my hand when the concert had ended, the Police Chief came to me and asked me to sit down with him. When I did, he showed me a document that had been sent to all the police stations notifying them that I was missing and that my parents wanted to find me. He then looked into my eyes in silence and I felt obliged to tell him the truth. I told him what had happened between my father and I and that my objective was to get from Constanza to the Tel Aviv Conservatory.

"What's your next stop?" He asked.

"Galatz, where I heard you can pick your own herring from a barrel and after that it's Constanza and then Tel Aviv," I replied.

"I know much too well where you come from", he whispered almost inaudibly, "You already know what is best for your future. I'll destroy these papers, but cancel your concert in Galatz. As soon as you get there, leave for Constanza, and tell your impresario not to advertise in Galatz. Leave for Constanza immediately."

As I thought about his advice on the way to Galatz, my mother's anguish over my disappearance started to sink into my soul. I realized how worried she must be, how she must wonder where I was and what has happened to me. When we reached Galatz and found lodging where we would have good meals, I decided to speak to one of the two blond sisters who ran the place. I chose the one I thought I'd be most comfortable with because I felt she liked me the best.

I asked her, "Please tell me how to say in Romanian: 'Daddy and Mommy, I am here in Galatz. Please come and get me'".

Then I asked her for the address of the post office. I hurried over there, and gave the postal clerk my message, crying all the while. When I returned to our lodgings, I was told that my impresario had left with all of his belongings. Only my clothes remained, but the pockets were empty. There was no money and no note for me.

Two days later my father arrived. He gave me a hard slap across the face and took me to the train. I never did get to see Constanza. It was a long, sad journey home.

After three concert tours, the Prague trauma, Krole, the Yeshiva experience and with no more voice for singing and no more plans for the future, I was back in Satu Mare, at the end of my rope, I avoided people in the streets and in the Temples. Secretly, I obtained illegal books from a young girl I never liked. The books were by Karl Marx, Tolstoi and similar authors. They were all very thick and heavy. I smuggled them up to the attic and hid them in a corner under the hay. Only our two cows looked at me when I crawled up on their feeding chute to read them. Only they knew my secret hideout. Sometimes I went to the Samos river to bathe and then I would dry off under the open sky.

I met only with my friends Kepes, Joly and Fried Yoska in my secret hideaway. Mostly we talked about which professions to learn for the future. All the other boys of our age were going to the gymnasium, or high school.

Yoska had also started in gymnasium. Unfortunately his father couldn't afford it but that fact had to be kept secret. His mother's family was very respected and wealthy, but he didn't want a handout from them. His father had a front seat in the big Temple even though he went around town repairing Singer sewing machines. That's when Yoska and I started to think about socialism, he more that I. At my request he promised not to join any group or illegal party.

Yoska told me that there were many from the gymnasium who secretly joined and attended socialist meetings. Later we heard that a bunch of boys our age had been picked up by the police. Those from the wealthiest parents were the first released, but no one was surprised. Those with money never had any problems.

Fried Yoska decided to fabricate women's purses in leather, and he tried to convince me to learn to make leather gloves. He didn't like it when I refused. He had hoped that one day we could be partners, but that wasn't for me. I wanted to be independent.

I climbed a tall tree by the Samos river and decided to figure out what I would do with my life. I had a difficult problem because I didn't have a school certificate, not even from elementary school. My father didn't like Christian teachers and believed in cheder only. After much lengthy deliberation, I decided to go to the center of Satu Mare and look for an apprenticeship in a trade with a future. I went to the largest store, where they knew me from the big Temple.

They listened to me kindly but turned me down, saying "You went to "cheder" and not to public school. We can't hire you as an apprentice without a minimum school certificate."

I went form store to store, and while I was always cordially and kindly received, the answer was always the same. I wondered who to approach next.

As I wracked my brain, I recalled my early singing days when I used to sing in a more modern, Reform-like Temple which, in the States today, would be considered Conservative. Because of that, I did it without my family's knowledge. The congregation loved it and paid me well. I also sang solos and duets with the Cantor in his home and, of course, also in secret. I recalled that one doctor in that congregation had been very enthusiastic about my singing for he had always offered me Swiss chocolates. I decided to go to Dr. Gorog's office to see if he could help me.

When I arrived there, he told his receptionist to give me something to drink and to make me comfortable. He told her not to let me leave the office until he had a chance to talk to me. I waited gratefully and, when his patient left, he asked me to come inside his examining room. That's when I realized he was a dentist and not a doctor, but at that point, that didn't matter to me.

At this point, I was sure he was going to try to let me down easy, telling me I was a fine young boy without enough formalized education or experience. He noticed my obvious deflation and reassured me that he had come up with a plan for me. I could hardly contain my excitement at this news! He said he could get me an apprenticeship with the man who ran the lab on one side of the office. The pay would not be very large and would depend on how well I could help and on how much I produced. It was the best offer I could find and I accepted the doctor's plan immediately. He was as good as his word, and I started my dental lab career soon thereafter. At this point I was only fifteen years old, but I was beginning a career that would last a lifetime.

I was to study beneath him, once again learning by example, repeating procedures he showed me until I was competent enough to perform them myself. I had presumed I would be fetching materials, acting as a gopher, cleaning and laboring. Instead, he allowed me to go so far as working in the patient's mouth, preparing and cementing crowns. Most of all, I was amazed to find myself with my own assistant, a young girl about my age.

Never did I have any trouble accepting the challenge of hard work for long hours. My biggest adversity lied in the wax-carving. Each tooth that needed replacement required a carving to fit the spot it was meant for, and somewhere in the deep recesses of my brain my father had built a wall I could not scale. After years and years of him telling me I could never work with my hands, that I was technically incompetent, I had acquired a mental block that kept me from properly crafting these teeth. Morning after morning, the secretary that opened the office would find me at my desk, there since the crack of dawn, struggling over and over to get it

right. Tears of anguish flooding my face, I would have dozens of botched wax models lying about me, momentous of my father's mental abuse, but never would I give in to my frustration. With each failure I could hear his torturous voice in my mind, "You will never amount to anything! You will end up nameless corpse, a beggar, or a thief in prison." This only made me try harder and harder. Three years it took me to finally grasp the fine concept, and the day I did was one of the most joyous occasions in memory. The secretary entered the office, only to find me staring at my handy-work in utter amazement. She approached me on the run and embraced me, kissing my face all over. "You did it! You finally did it!" She cried. My model was eventually entered into an annual wax-carving contest, where it earned me a very well-deserved first prize. Not only had I endured my frustration, I had torn down one more wall built up by years of my father's antagonism.

It seemed, after this accomplishment, I was prepared to move on in the world. I left Satu Mare for Budapest, carrying with me letters of the highest recommendation possible, and they opened the door for me to any dental lab or dentist's office I wished to enter.

Budapest was to me a shockingly beautiful city full of new beginnings. It satisfied my deep, inner hunger for knowledge and culture. The daily new challenges helped me grow. I learned by observing others who were decent and kind people. Each day, during the lunch break, I had a chance to sit at my workbench and read all kinds of books. After work I continued with my reading and I explored the city. "Buda" was the center where elegant, sophisticated people lived. "Pest" was the part of the city with incredibly beautiful places, especially along the Danube River and the "Margit" promenade. By then Fried Yoska and another friend had also finished their apprenticeships and they joined me in Budapest where the three of us rented an apartment together. I finally allowed myself to unwind a bit, live a little, and have fun.

Since each of us worked in our own parts of the city, at different times, it was easy to manage sharing the somewhat-small apartment space. This also provided ample opportunity for us to share in the ample supply of women. It was not too long, though, before I discovered that, while my interest in a communist government had abated as my apprenticeship became a full-fledged career, my friends had become active members in the illegal meetings. When they finally dragged me to one, I was shocked at how elitist they had become—with separatist notions that pointed at a singling out of the well-to-do members of our community (some of which I knew and had dealings with) as blockades in their path to freedom. I openly spoke out against their seemingly sudden movement toward a militaristic dogma, and it was not long before I decided I wanted out of the apartment.

My aspirations were to first move into a better neighborhood where I could concentrate on my career in dentistry. I found a young Jewish man from Satmar who was already out of high school in search of a similar arrangement, and the moment I met him I knew we would get along together. Without the distractions of my former roommates' extremist beliefs, I found my life much less complicated. The most extreme my new roommate and I got were the days he brought home exotic cakes he had baked in his father's delicatessen. Those days, we would eat like kings, and when the delicacy was gone we would go back to our bachelor standard of unidentifiable gulash. We grew close, with the same hopes and dreams—

finally, here was a young man my age I could identify with. However, despite all my efforts, I was hard-pressed to come up with the ability to rouse him to join me for Shabbat on Saturday morning. Those days, I would sit alone in the gigantic Temple, thoughts drifting occasionally to my family, who I saw less and less of. Mostly, I would contemplate the situation my poor mother remained in. She too was tormented just as I was, helpless against my father's false pride, without any hope of the freedom I had gained. She was prisoner to Father's incessant need to fritter his money in his quest to glorify himself. It was those times that I realized just how much perseverance my mother had within her.

For all these reasons, I was utterly amazed the day I entered my apartment to find her sitting upon my chair, holding one of my socks and weeping to herself.

My emotions were mixed. Overjoyed to see her, yet concerned for her grief, I asked her what was wrong. Sniffling, she shook her head to let me know her tears were from joy, not sadness. "I know this is your chair that I'm sitting in because your hand washed socks are hanging on its side. I'm crying because I know you'll never find a wife who is as neat and clean as you. Your father now admits how much he misjudged you! When you moved out, he said you'd wind up in jail or at the police station. Instead he has heard from Cantor Siegel's family that you go to Temple every Shabbat and that you mingle only with decent company."

I felt as if a load had been lifted from my heart. I was able to go on a visit to Satu Mare and to start fixing my father's teeth. As I repaired the damage from years of negligence in my father's teeth, I realized that, once again, my father had finally forgiven me. I count that time among my most precious blessings, because this would be the final time my father would grant me his forgiveness. It would be the final time because I would never see my mother or father again.

CHAPTER 5: MY LONG JOURNEY TO SWEDEN

I don't recall how or when I obtained an almost brand-new, long overcoat, or how I wound up in a Jewish home where the family gave me a room for the night. The room had a private entrance and a beautiful, big bed, with linen white as snow. I simply couldn't make myself sleep in that beautiful bed. I didn't want to take off my wonderful new coat and I didn't want to make that beautiful, clean bed dirty. There was no wash-basin in the room and I was too shy to ask for one. Finally, I lay down on the floor, put my arms under my head, and fell asleep. That was the way I had slept on top of the rocks, and that's how I had seen my father take lunchtime naps on his narrow workbench. In the morning, my kind hosts told me they had looked through the key hole and seen my hesitation to sleep on the bed, and then seen me choose to sleep on the floor instead. I said good-bye to these lovely people and continued on my journey to Satmar.

The following night, a Russian soldier grabbed me on the street. He said something to me in Russian and started to feel both my arms. While he did that, I kept repeating that I was a partisan, a Marshall Tito partisan. Finally he caught on, opened my overcoat, and discovered my tiny bikini. My entire body, except for that one minuscule area, was completely black from the coal dust I had worked in. Besides my overcoat, my only other piece of clothing was a pair of wooden shoes. Then the Russian soldier pushed up his sleeves and I saw fabulous Swiss watches going all the way up each of his arms.

"Pick yourself any watch you want," he said.

I chose a gold Schafhauser, thanked him profusely, and went to the railroad station. I was determined to get to Satmar to find out if any of my family members were still alive. The train I took was packed. People were on every surface: the floor, the seats and even the steps. Someone opened a window and called out "Amchu," a code word by which one Jew recognizes another. On the train I learned that very few youngsters ever went back to Satmar, and so I decided that perhaps I should start my search for my family in Petrosan. It would be a longer trip than Satmar, and I realized that I would need more money than I had with me. When I left the train, I met a Jewish Russian officer. He had his own truck and there were three other soldiers with him. They were trying to find money and other valuables to take back to Russia. The officer let me travel with them for awhile and we all got along well. When we passed a sign that said "Arad", I remembered singing there when I was on tour with my father and also with Farkas, my other impresario. In that town, I met people who remembered me well. They told me confidentially that they had just discovered a big warehouse filled with sugar. They suggested that we fill the truck with sugar and make several trips to Bucharest. They said we were bound to make good money, but they warned us not to go to Budapest as we would be in danger of being arrested there.

The officer let me travel with them for awhile and we all got along well. When we passed a sign that said "Arad", I remembered singing there when I was on tour with my father and also with Farkas, my other impresario. In that town, I met people who remembered me well. They told me confidentially that they had just discovered a big warehouse filled with sugar. They suggested that we fill the truck with sugar and make several trips to Bucharest. They said we were bound to make good

money, but they warned us not to go to Budapest as we would be in danger of being arrested there.

The four Russians and I slept in the home of a very nice peasant family who fed us well. In the morning, the Russian officer instructed the soldiers to thank the peasants and not to take any of their dishes or other possessions. Upon hearing these orders, one of the soldiers dropped the ringing alarm clock he was about to take, and when it wouldn't stop its clamor, he shot it dead. He didn't know it was just a plain old clock. He was so primitive and uneducated that he thought it was some sort of smart weapon!

The five of us went on the road and made very good money from the trading we conducted. I was able to travel in first class all over but, on my way to Petrosan, I had to give up my watch to a Russian soldier.

In Petrosan, I did find some family. I found my father's brother, who I didn't like very much, and whose family had managed to survive the war in Romania. I also found my father's childless sister. My aunt and I had always loved each other and, as a child, I used to love staying with her. I was curious about my uncle's youngest daughter, who was about my age, because as children we used to enjoy each other's company. As I asked my aunt about her, I wondered if I shouldn't try to get to know her once again.

My aunt told me that my cousin worked as a seamstress and added firmly: "Precious, don't go there, not even for one night. They're not your kind of people anymore, and if you stay even one night, you'll feel trapped and you'll never get out of there again."

I took her advice and went on my way. We both cried and kissed each other before I left because we knew we'd never see each other again. I shall always remain grateful to her.

One day as I came into the house, my sister Judy confronted me with a letter from the American Joint Distribution Committee (see appendices for a copy of the letter). Judy explained that Helen could not be admitted to the United States in her present condition and that she needed to go to Sweden for an operation. Poor Helen had been beaten on the head by an SS man and, as a result, suffered from epilepsy. It was hoped that brain surgery would relieve her of the problem, and the only doctor that performed it successfully was Dr. Olivecrona of Sweden. Judy said that she and my brothers had decided that I should accompany Helen to Sweden because I had a profession and would be better able to make enough money to support both of us and to pay for the operation. In the meantime, Judy, Alex and Jassi would wait for us in Germany and once Helen was able to travel, we would all go to the United States together.

I tried to understand their reasoning, but I resented their making such a decision without consulting me. I went to see Helen and asked her whether she had known anything about this, and she said that she did not. We discussed the matter at length and we wondered why our older brother and Judy didn't want to go to Sweden with us as well. I knew deep inside of me that I would once again be alone. I didn't feel ready to take on such a huge responsibility all by myself and I wanted to at least have Alex with me. I felt that now that we were adults it was the right time for us to grow and develop our individuality together in the new and promising future.

Helen finally agreed with their plan and said "Since they've decided to re-

move themselves from their responsibility for me, we two are better off going by ourselves."

I then agreed as well. I had enough of Germany! I had enough of their hypocritical attitude and the smell of misery left from the past years. I had enough of unfair and unjust suffering and dehumanization. I too had spent a few days in a German hospital so that they could remove the coal dust imbedded into my skin by the heat from the little locomotive. I had enough!

I cannot remember anything at all about our departure from Germany, not even my good-byes. I only remember that once we reached Sweden, Helen and I were quarantined and I felt the loneliness of being all alone once again.

When the quarantine ended, the Swedish authorities gave each of us a new wardrobe. I was impressed by how white my new long sleeved shirts were and how the collars were beautifully starched. My favorite piece of clothing was my long raincoat with a button-down hood. Inside it was lined with beautiful English wool material dyed green. It looked good on me for once.

BERGEN-BELSEN
ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

AMERICAN JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

March 31, 1946

To: JDC
Soviet-Occupied Z
Stockholm, Sweden

From: D. B. Todlinger
Zone Director
JDC
Bergen Belsen
DP Mil. Gov. Det.
BAOR

Attention: Mr. or Miss Schwarz

The bearer of this letter, Dr. Bela Hussen, is going to Sweden with his sister, Helena Hussen, who recently received special permission to enter Sweden in order to have an operation performed on her head by Dr. Olivecrona. The young girl was struck on the head by an SS man in Auschwitz, and as a result, suffered certain injuries to her brain and skull, causing a tumor or epilepsy.

Dr. Hussen has taken his sister to many doctors in Germany and all of them stated that only Dr. Olivecrona could do the operation which might restore Helena to full health. We have a high opinion of Dr. Hussen's family here (Bela was served for us for several months [illegible] well), and the very circumstance that the operation is being done in Sweden reflects every possible assistance to these very fine young people. Bela has informed us that he is willing to go to work in Sweden, in order to pay for his sister's operation. It must tell to what Dr. Olivecrona is charging, but the circumstances of their case and they have his fees relatively low.

[illegible] you can do anything [illegible] relative [illegible] near the hospital where Helena will be, would be much appreciated. He is, naturally, anxious to be with her as much as possible during the period she will be hospitalized.

Sincerely yours,

Daniel B. Todlinger

Daniel B. Todlinger
Zone Director

mr/g

AMERICAN JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

March 31, 1946

To: AJDC
Havslmregatan 2
Stockholm, Sweden

From: D.B. Wodlinger
zone Director
AJDC
Camp Honne-Belsen
618 Mil.Gov.De.
HAOR

Attention: Mr. or Miss Gottfarb;

The bearer of this letter, Mr. Bela Nussen, is going to Sweden with his sister, Helena Nussen, who recently received special permission to enter Sweden in order to have an operation performed on her head by Dr. Olivecrona. The young girl was beaten on the head by an SS man in Auschwitz, and as a result suffered certain injuries to her brain and skull, causing a form of epilepsy.

Mr. Nussen has taken his sister to many doctors in Germany and all of them stated that only Dr. Olivecrona could do the operation which would restore Helena to full health. I have a high opinion of the Nussen family here (Bela has worked for us for several months and we know him well) and are very anxious for the American Joint in Sweden to offer every possible assistance to these very nice young people. Bela has indicated to us that he is willing to go to work at once, in order to earn money to pay for his sister's operation. It might well be that Dr. Olivecrona is informed of the circumstances on this case and may make his fees relatively low.

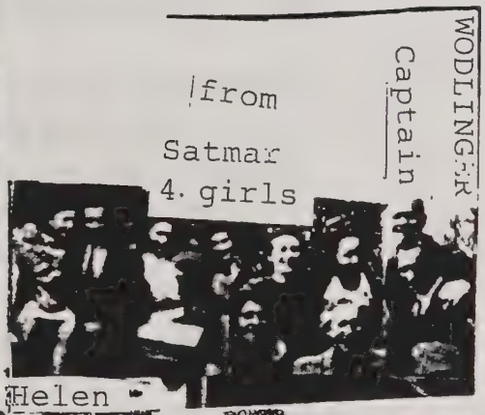
Anything you can do to help Bela settle somewhere near the hospital where Helen will be would be much appreciated. He is, naturally, anxious to be with her as much as possible during the period that she will be hospitalized.

Sincerely yours,

David B. Wodlinger
Zone Director

Béla

Helen



WODLINGER

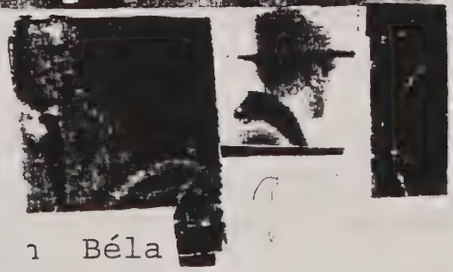
Captain

from

Satmar

4. girls

Helen



1 Béla

I had learned the location of the hospital where Helen was to be operated on. Since it was within walking distance from where we were staying, I took her hand and we started out. In the middle of the street, near the hospital, poor Helen collapsed and had a major epileptic seizure. I took my wooden-like spoon and forced it between her teeth to keep her from biting her tongue. When she finally stopped screaming "Mama. Mama," in Yiddish, her eyes came into focus again, and she saw me wiping her face and mouth. She was embarrassed and felt sorry and sad for me. I picked her up in my arms and carried her the rest of the way to the hospital.

When Dr. Olivecrona greeted us, I was surprised that he was expecting us. He was an impressive man, dressed all in white, including a helmet on his head with an electric light, and white gloves on his hands. He didn't need any papers from me and he didn't ask any questions. Kind and gentle nurses came to me and one of them explained carefully, in German, that Helen was in the hands of a world genius and that the operation could take as much as six to eight hours. She suggested that I join the nurses in their private cafeteria for breakfast and that I tell them our past history.

After some time passed, I asked if I could get a report about the doctor's progress. They made a call and then told me that I could take a peek at the operation through a small window. They told me to look for Dr. Olivecrona's facial expression to try and see if he was whistling. He always whistled while he operated.

After the nurses and I took a peek, they asked me to sit down in an office and to tell them about my future plans. I showed them the letter I carried that explained that I had to get a job in my profession to support Helen and me, and to pay for the operation. They called the Foreign Commission and made an appointment with them for me for the following morning. Then, at my request, they looked up the telephone number and address of the Stockholm Head Cantor. I called him at his home just as soon as they gave me the number.

Both the Cantor and his wife got on the phone to talk to me. I told him why I was in Sweden. He and his wife then insisted that I not move from where I was and that they would pick me up. They insisted that I stay with them until Helen's problems were settled. They were decent people and I felt badly when the Cantor told me that he used to go to the Grossinger's Cantorial Convention and that he was upset with the Cantor's Association President. He had sent the man one of his compositions and it was never acknowledged.

When they brought me to their house, I asked the Cantor to look up the name and address of the largest dental lab in the city. I explained that right after we were finished eating, I would go there and apply for a job, which is exactly what I did. It was in the heart of Stockholm, in a building with two tall towers facing each other.

The lab took up the thirteenth and fourteenth floors. Each door led to a different department. Finally I found the director, Bertil Almer. I asked the secretary if I could speak in German. She said he speaks only English and she volunteered to be the interpreter.

First I bragged to him about all that I knew and how I worked with doctors in

the big labs in Budapest and other places. Then I asked him how much he would pay me because I had to support myself and my sick sister. I told him that I was willing to work overtime. I thought I had an idea of what I should be paid because I had gotten information from the Cantor about the value of the Swedish Crown. Bertil Almer threw some figures at me which struck me as very low and I felt insulted. What he offered me felt like a cold shower. Suddenly my Hungarian pride and temper went into high gear and I grabbed the door knob and stormed out, slamming the door behind me.

I returned to the hospital to learn that Helen had survived the operation but that I could not visit her as yet. The doctor left a message that he would see me in three days, and an appointment was made with his office.

The following morning I went to the "Foreign Commission and blew my top at the secretary.

"I was told," I said, "that Sweden is really democratic. The director from that lab probably doesn't like Jews. He insulted me by offering me a ridiculously low salary."

This was an outburst embedded in me from my previous Jewish Ghetto complex.

"I want to work overtime and evenings in order to pay for my sister's operation," I continued.

The secretary put her hand on my shoulder gently and said, "Bela, calm down. You are a Hungarian survivor and I truly understand your outburst. I understand what you said. You also said that Bertil Almer is antisemitic."

"Yes," I interrupted, "I heard that he wrote something in the newspapers to that effect."

I didn't tell her that the Cantor's twelve year-old daughter had mentioned that she heard this from her friends.

"Now listen carefully Bela. This is important," the secretary continued, "nobody in Sweden is antisemitic. This particular Bertil Almer did once write an article in Stockholm's main newspaper about how he had traveled all over Europe before the war to look for experienced, knowledgeable dental technicians. When he was in Poland he could hardly find any Jewish youngsters who had dexterity, and they all wore side-curls. It was not an antisemitic statement; on the contrary, he wanted to bring young Jewish workers to Sweden but couldn't find any. Now, after the war, the situation in Sweden is very different. A lot of Swedish technicians are unable to work in their profession. Most of them now work in radio manufacturing. However, if Bertil Almer wants to hire you now, and he really doesn't have any Jewish dental technicians working for him, he must have seen something in you in order to offer you a job. Personally, I'd like to lend you some money until you get work. You'll earn plenty, of that I'm sure."

When she finished, I got up and thanked her for her time and went straight back to Bertil Almer's office. As I came in, he was seated at his wooden table, and he smiled at me as I entered.

"What kind of people are you Swedes?" I asked. "What are you made of? I just left here with the manners of a temperamental, crazy Hungarian gypsy, and yet you're greeting me with a smile."

"I'm sitting here waiting for you," he answered in German.

That was the beginning of a five-year friendship filled with mutual respect. I worked in his laboratory which was famous for having the finest quality of workmanship then available. It was extremely modern. Each technician dressed in a long white coat and had his own private glass enclosure.

I was fascinated by working and learning the world's finest, highest quality dental technologies. From different countries, after the war and during the war, from all over Europe, they were running to Stockholm to get into the big Tahn-Technical-laboratoritet and its fascinating Director Bertil Almer. In Stockholm's highest tower on its highest top floors, were produced the newest and most complete dental reconstruction gold and porcelain appliances and all other things there are for the mouth! While Europe was fainting and suffering, drained of all materials from the war with Hitler, Sweden for many years was not involved in wars.

Many Swedish dental technicians had to work in radio factories instead!

We worked in and with the world's most modern and newly invented technology and equipment. Most of us had his or her own separate glass enclosed booth and telecommunication with any other department manager or assistant. Many materials were also produced ourselves.

I was specially fascinated by our Director and owner Bertil Almer. He had a way of seeing each and everyone of us and would at anytime run to help out hen he noticed that anybody needed advise. In a minute the problem was solved and he made you feel nice afterwards (just singing to yourself). He respected me and I respected him for his guidance and desire for me to learn and each year to move to another department and to a higher salary. I was the only The main manager, with whom I started as an assistant, offered to teach me Christmas greetings in Swedish. I listened carefully and felt very pleased that when the director's tall and stunning wife came to the lab, I was able to bow properly and say in Swedish, "Happy holidays and happy Christmas".

As I came to the end of my sentence, she and every other person in the room burst out in thunderous laughter. Only then did I find out that the words I had just uttered were not a greeting. I had said, "You are so beautiful. I would like to go to bed with you".

I became terribly scared, and thought that I had lost everything in this place, but I was most pleasantly surprised when I realized everyone present understood that my words were a joke played on me. At that point Bertil Almer announced that, contrary to the usual policy, I would be allowed to work in all the departments, one after the other. Until I learned how each one operated.

At first I was not permitted to work, but only to observe. I studied Swedish until the time was ripe for me to use my hands. I learned the language very quickly because I had to.

I loved working in the lab and it didn't take long for me to realize why I was allowed to only observe at first. Sweden had not been involved in either World War and so they had made continuous progress in dental technology. I had to forget almost everything I had learned in Hungary and had to become familiar with all that had been developed. I was soon able to produce more quality and quantity in all areas. My raises in salary came without my ever having to ask for them. I liked the Swedish people because they were so openhearted, honest and invariably polite.

When I visited Dr. Olivecrona he gave me both good and bad news. The

operation on Helen was successful but it came too late for any changes. The epileptic seizures could not be stopped. The doctor then disclosed that he had a difficult time getting me admitted to Sweden in the role of her responsible parent in view of the dangerous nature of the operation. He said he would now do everything he could to enable me to stay in Sweden.

Little did I know at that time that Helen would never get an affidavit to go to the United States! For years Helen would go in and out of Sweden's most famous hospitals to be treated by a variety of doctors and psychologists in an attempt to stop her screaming. She also had tuberculosis. The epilepsy and the TB were a certain no-no to entry into the United States. Those were very difficult days for me, and I had nobody to talk to about my burden.

I corresponded with my sister and two brothers in the States but they could offer no encouraging words. I had no idea how the situation could ever be resolved. When I went to visit my sister in these hospitals, I had to be careful not to bring female friends with me or to smile at the nurses. The poor kid was petrified that I might fall in love, get married and she would be all alone. Unfortunately, her seizures never stopped completely. The only good thing was that we could both tell in advance before a seizure appeared.

In my spare time I started to wax-up and carve a baby deer. I cast it in pure vitallium and polished it with a rubber wheel to a high shine which will last forever. Then I made a chain hook and a safety pin from platinum wires and soldered them to the back so that it became both a pin and a pendant that could be worn around the neck. I made sure to leave enough room in the wax-up to inscribe the words "To Mrs. Olivecrona from Bela". At the same time I made a Mogen David with a circle around it for Helen from the finest gold.

When I gave the baby deer to Mrs. Olivecrona at the supper table. She jumped up and kissed it. As she did so, something from the Bible flashed through my mind. I remembered the Jews in the desert worshipping the Golden Calf.

Helen was more content in Sweden than I. Most of our friends married Swedes and the Swedish government have them new apartments. All of us foreigners were well dressed and we lacked for nothing.

"We have everything here and we have each other," Helen used to say, "Let Judy, Alex and Jassi live in America. We don't need them."

I think that it was just before the third Yom Kippur in Sweden that Cantor Rosenbluth asked me if I would be interested in handling the High Holiday overflow. I accepted his offer and then asked Bertil Almer for the time off. I couldn't believe my ears when he said he wanted to come and hear me, which he did.

Unexpectedly I became emotionally torn. I had my back to the congregation as I sang, and when I heard noses being blown and sounds of weeping, something inside me snapped. I realized that since the war, I was no longer a very religious person. I felt that it was hypocritical to fool the people. I had conflicting feelings struggling inside of me until I finished all of my Yom Kippur performances and even for weeks and months thereafter. I began to feel that my stay in Sweden was a temporary one, but had no idea of how and when it would end. I never mentioned any of my inner conflicts and doubts to Helen.

Both my income and my social life were improving. I had much fun with my friends and each Friday evening I had supper in the Cantor's home. I had good

friends and colleagues. One of those colleagues would visit me years later, both in my lab in New York and in my home in Lynbrook. After that visit he sent very valuable jewelry to Madeleine and an open invitation for us to visit his vacation home in Switzerland. But that was still far in the then unknown future.

This is Bertil Almar, the Director and Owner of the International reknown Europe finest Dental Technology Laboratory. Two entire floors in the tallest tower in Stockholm! I was very fortunate to work for him for seven years!

I spent some of my Sundays with Helen. I visited her in the hospital or in the rest homes in the countryside when she went to recuperate there. Her TB was finally eliminated, but her epileptic seizures continued. I always carried the wooden stick in my pocket to help her in case of a seizure. Sometimes she and I went shopping for pretty dresses and she became more beautiful than ever. On other days we took day trips to various places. During my summer vacation, we always went to our favorite, beautiful island in the North Sea between Sweden and Norway. It had small houses that looked very cute because they were completely covered with roses on their outside walls. We participated in all the midsummer festivities such as singing and dancing. It always impressed me that the Swedes felt honored to have us Hungarian Jews sing and dance with them. We always left a bunch of new song sheets for the islanders to study for the next year.

This is the place we met Eric. Everyone in the family know the story, but I'll tell it anyway, just for the record.

Once when we were visiting the island, Eric walked over to us and asked me very politely if I would allow him to dance with my wife. His request really shook me. I wondered if this was what people really thought of her and me. My second reaction was one of pleasant relief, the kind I never expected to feel.

Eric's obvious interest in Helen and his tinselfish attention to her condition turned from friendship to wedlock. Eric converted to Judaism to prove his love for her. Miraculously, they had two healthy daughters and lived as a family in Sweden for a number of years. They then emigrated to Israel and lived in the Haifa area. Eric passed away in January 1984, only weeks before Bela and Madeleine made Aliyah. Six months after Eric's death, when Helen went to Sweden to take care of financial matters, she passed away in her hotel room during a massive epileptic seizure. Alex and Bela rushed to Sweden and took her back to Haifa for burial next to her husband. Helen and Eric's two daughters married in Israel; one has three children and the other two.

My quality of life became fantastic in Sweden. Dr.Almer liked my rapport with the patients and I loved it! Money was coming to me by the end of the month from the big cases! Christmas and New Year's I spent with my girlfriend Margit in Paris. I LOVED SWEDEN!!

CHAPTER 6: THE MIRACLE IN THE GAMBLING PLACE DEAUVILLE IN FRANCE

In Satmar, next to our house, lived an old lady and her unmarried daughter. Every Saturday morning my father walked to the "schul" (Temple) all dressed up with his "strammel" and "kaftan" and I walked behind him carrying his "talit" in the big "talit" bag with the "sidur" and "humash" in it. Breakfast was not allowed before the prayers, but only after. This old lady, as we passed her home gate, silently sneaked me a slice of baked chocolate or poppy seed cake. There was no more precious or more expensive item in existence to me in the entire world when I silently consumed that treasure. She told me that she has another daughter living in Paris.

From Stockholm, Sweden, a girlfriend and I used to go to Paris on my free time (mostly at Christmas time). She used to copy the newest French model's dresses and workers in Stockholm worked for her to reproduce them. She herself was a model. On one of our trips we decided to go and see what this gambling looks like, neither of us having ever seen. Suddenly, between the crowd and tables, I recognized the old lady's daughter who lived with her in Satmar.

I told my friend, "Please be sure not to be alarmed when I approach that lady in the big black hat; it will probably be a loud noisy Hungarian reaction from her."

She did not at all know who I was. She had last seen me before the war when I was eight or nine years old with "payot" side burns hanging behind my ears. When I finally told her my name, that I was called Berele Bela, she was not only loud, but she screamed, and tears and crying followed. She was also a survivor of the Holocaust. Hugging me, she introduced me to her sister Rose who had lived all that time in Paris, and to Rose's husband Henri, and also to a young teenage girl whom nobody introduced. I briefly told her that I had in Sweden with my younger sister who was very sick, going from one hospital to another, that even in the streets she screamed "Mama, Mama". When I introduced my long-legged, tall, Swedish, blond, girlfriend Margit Nilssen, my completely shaken friend Margit could not understand them. Henri, Rose's husband, immediately said to my girlfriend in broken English, "Do you remember how in London we had a good time together?".

My girl friend turned to me and said, "Bela who are these ridiculous people? I have never been in London! I don't understand this guy!".

I could not hold back my burst of laughter, but pulled her aside and carefully explained to her that this was probably a Hungarian joke.

"Please," I said, "please do not take it seriously. I apologize to you!"

In no time we all became very friendly and they invited us both to visit their home in Paris on our way to Sweden and we did.

In her home in Paris the reception was very warm; the table was set nicely with food; this was the first time in my life that I had tasted champagne. During that evening, Hindu announced in French (which I could not understand but whose meaning was obvious) that this young man was a child protege, famous for his beautiful voice, who had been on several "tournees", giving many concerts.

"Why don't you ask him to sing?

Henri asked his daughter Madeleine to play the piano to accompany (it was a medley from Josef Smith). When her father asked Madeleine what she thought,

Madeleine answered: "His musicianship is okay, but his voice is a little rusty". I was impressed with her straightforward answer. After that she announced that she had to leave, somebody was waiting for her. Back in Stockholm, I wrote a nice thank-you letter in Hungarian and asked Hindu to translate for the whole family. I also left open in my letter the possibility for her write to me about my questions regarding Satmar. A long time passed without receiving an answer to my most important questions. I wrote a second letter saying that my questions about Satmar were important and asked if they would please ask the young lady to write to me in French, since I had a friend in Stockholm who was fluent in French who could translate Madeleine's French answer for me. Hindu translated my Hungarian to Madeleine. That worked out perfectly for over a year! My writing was mostly out of curiosity to learn more about her and to know who she really was. I already knew of her parents and her very decent upbringing as an only Jewish daughter in Paris in a well known neighborhood.

After one year of corresponding I finally asked a personal question: Is there a boy friend in her life? As in all of her correspondence, her answer was straightforward and honest. I also was honest, telling about my problems with my sick sister. It was time for me to see her in person. I told her that I had a business trip to make to Paris if we could meet. After a few days we were engaged, in the family dinning room with its walls completely covered all around with flowers! I was completely in love and so, I feel, was Madeleine, and that did not change after years of marriage and three children. Later, we honeymooned in Nice at Negresco with four waiters around our table. Then we went hitchhiking back to Paris. Madeleine showed her legs on the road to make cars stop and they did, but they were not too happy when I jumped out from behind the bushes where I had been hiding. They were disappointed when they saw me, but reluctantly let me come along. Our rehearsed "slager" was that we had run out of money on our honeymoon. We lived and ate well from delicious countryside French cold cuts, French bread, and fruits. We actually ate far better than in the fancy Negresco. We traveled to Sweden to see my sick sister and Hutner's home. Back in Paris, Madeleine's father became my very dear friend. He suggested that I travel first to the United States with a visitor's visa and see my brothers and sister (since I stubbornly did not want to live and raise my future children in Paris). If I liked it and my brothers and sisters were okay, then Madeleine and her family would all come to New York and there would be a wedding!

If New York was not a good place for us to live, or my two brothers Jassi and Alex and my sister Judy are the same as they were in Satmar, extremely orthodox, and would not accept my future French wife and my way of living, it would be extremely problematic. Most importantly, my sick sister Helen was in Sweden, and the only man available for her to marry was a Christian and a Swede. It was high time for the three of them to take some responsibility. I decided that these rich Americans should put together some money for a beautiful house for Helen and her future husband in Sweden. His name was Eric Johanson and he was truly in love with Helen! An Angel! If they would not, I would accept Madeleine's mother's offer for us to return to Paris for our wedding and have a completely furnished apartment in Paris waiting for us. Then we would all talk more about the future. Our first meeting was incredibly emotional and warm. They all agreed that Eric was an angel from heaven for Helen, and after a while I realized that they were not rich

Americans after all. Jassi was married to Annette, a divorcee with one son, Alan. By the time I arrived, they had two children together, Paul and Donna. The five of them lived in New Jersey about a grocery store which they ran together. Alex had married Freda and they had a baby girl they named Julia. They lived in Brooklyn and Alex operated a gas station. Judy had married Sidney and they had a son, Peter. Judy and Sidney lived in Brooklyn and Sidney worked for a company that manufactured bedspreads and other items for beds.

In 1951, I took a pilot trip on the advise of Henri, Madeleine's father, to the U.S.A. and for the first time met my brothers and sister who had immigrated to the States four years before. They had all married and were struggling to make a living.

In July 1951, I returned from the States to Paris to marry Madeleine. We had discussed having the wedding in New York instead, but Rose Rozenfeld needed surgery a short time before the wedding and so that plan became obsolete. Madeleine and I honeymooned on the French Riviera and in Sweden, where we visited Helen in a convalescent home. Helen was not married as yet. There we spoke about Helen and Eric's future; since the American families had unanimously agreed that Helen and Eric were meant for each other! Madeleine and I were invited to a big beautiful villa for an evening gala reception during our honeymoon. Speaking of honor, the owner's name was Hurttner: he had a title in Swedish which meant "Honorable Prince" because he was the designer of the Swedish submarines which just disappeared underwater under a mountain top secret site and also a tank. That family had one daughter who used to come to have lunch with me in the tower where I once worked and who always ordered a strong alcoholic drink. We met a number of times at a so-called "under the umbrella", but she was always about 30 minutes late, and when she invited me to their home for an evening I noted that during the conversation in the living room she disappeared. I too sneaked out without her noticing me, followed her and saw her go into her room, pull away a pillow and grab a bottle, drinking from it like somebody who is very thirsty! When I arranged to meet her father alone, he very honestly told me that they had a problem on their hands and told me: "For sure you do not deserve another problem yourself". We remained friends and he told me if I should need more financial help for my sister I should let him know when the occasion arises and he will ask the Swedish government.

They knew all about Madeleine and I and so when Madeleine and I came to visit Helen we were invited to a very elegant sit down dinner with some Jewish friends.

This Mr. Huttner had studied human existence with a quick mind and eyes, and as a naval engineer he had studied the engines of submarines.

Madeleine was truly amazed with the many originals they had from world-famous oil painters like Rubens, Delacroix, Botecelli etc. After that came our wedding in Paris.

We, the newlyweds, arrived in New York on the "Isle-de-France" on September 13, 1951. The Nussen brothers and their families and Judy and her family were all there to meet them. Madeleine and I settled at 1660 E. 13th St. in Brooklyn. I had a job waiting for me in Times Square dental lab, and started to work immediately. By then Madeleine was already expecting her first child, Sheldon. We lived at the Brooklyn address from 1951 to 1956. I had several jobs in different labs during

those years and finally opened up my own lab in the Time and Life building in Rockefeller Center. Money was good. I picked from any dental laboratory to see the American knowhow. I was, however, disappointed in New York's architecture. At one time I had a partner named Sy and so the lab was named Sybell for Sy and Bela. In 1955 our second son, Kenny, was born.

Our life revolved around family, work, and friends. Some of our friends came from the past in Sweden, like the Kennedy family who settled in Queens, and others came from the Swedish Vitallium manufacturing firm. We made other friends through the dental lab industry, like the Klein family and the Howards. Sometime in 1954 or 1955, I took another one of my pilot trips to California with the idea of settling on the West Coast. My father-in-law, Henri Rozenfeld, had a childhood friend, Gruen, a well-to-do bachelor who lived on Wilshire Blvd. in Los Angeles, whom I contacted. I also contacted a man named Fisher who was a friend of George Klein in New York. As a result, I secured two or three jobs in different areas of Los Angeles, and even found a place where the family could live. Unfortunately Alex and Judy were so upset by these plans that we had to be given up.

From 1956 to 1959 we lived with our two sons in Kew Garden Hills in Queens. By then Madeleine's father had passed away and her mother had emigrated to the United States. Madeleine's brother Low followed her shortly thereafter. In time Rose married again, to Ben Freedman.

In 1959, we moved to Florida, through a contact with the "Vitallium" company. At first we lived in Miami where I had a dental lab, but after a short while we moved to Palm Beach County.

We established ourselves in the local Jewish community. In 1962 when our daughter, Joy Nogique, was born, I resumed my Cantorial career. In 1963, Sheldon started at the Hebrew Academy and my Cantorial career took off. I switched from a Reform Temple to a Conservative one under the leadership of Rabbi Fishman. The social life of my family was at its peak. We became involved in all kinds of Jewish community affairs and various organizations. The New York Nussens visited the Florida Nussens and so did Rose, Ben and Lou.

Due to economic conditions and the desire to provide a religious education for our children, we sold our home in 1966 and moved to Miami Beach where we lived in the Morton Towers. I opened a lab on Lincoln Rd. in partnership with Mel Simkins and also held a Cantorial position at the Israelite Center in Miami. The boys went to the Hebrew Academy and Joy started school at the Solomon Schecter School which was affiliated with Temple Emmanuel. The social life of the family revolved around these institutions and Cantorial families such as the Seifs, Adlers, and Feldmans. Rose and Ben moved from New York to Miami Beach, but Rose was very sick and she passed away in 1967.

My connection to Vitallium continued to be important to me. The name "Vitalium" is known as an international dental franchise company headquartered in New York. They made the decision as to which dental laboratory owner (who must be ethical and a certified dental laboratory) was eligible to receive their cobalt and chrome secret formula, which at that time was also used in the inside of the human body as a hip or knee replacement and so started the dental implant which was already learned and produced in Sweden. I happened to be working in Stockholm, Sweden in the world's most famous, modern and advanced dental laboratory and

was given the responsibility to talk to two gentlemen visiting us from New York. I reamed to set up the complete department (including prefabricated material, revolutionary new techniques which replaced wax and lactronic casting machines etc.). When I arrived in New York I visited these gentlemen in their headquarters; these same gentlemen were always very helpful to me through the years. I participated in many interesting seminars and they gave me most important written information. For example, after three or four exploratory trips to California we selected real estate and were constantly in touch until they found a location near Fashion Island where I have seen a tall medical building going up. We finally moved into a new rent and option to buy house not far from the medical building on Marguerite in Corona del Mar near the ocean. The director of Vitalium happened to live in La Jolla and gave me the book "Future Shock" by Alvin Tofler.

VILLE DE PARIS ____ e Arrondissement

MARIAGE

célébré le vingt huit Juillet, mil neuf cent cinquante et un

ENTRE : Peter NUSSEN

Né le six Juillet mil neuf cent vingt et un à Satmarhémeti

Arrond^t d ____ départ^t d HONGRIE

Profession : Technicien Dentiste

Domicilié à Brooklyn (E.U.A)

Fils de Peter Nussen
et de Julia Katz } mariés

~~Veuf ou divorcé de~~

ET Madeleine ROZENFELD

Née le quatre Janvier mil neuf cent trente et un à Paris

Arrond^t d 18e départ^t de Seine

Profession : Etudiante

Domiciliée à Paris, 17 rue Godot de Mauroy

Fille de Henri Rozenfeld
et de Rosalie LEVI } mariés

~~Veuve ou divorcée de~~

~~Contrat de mariage~~

SIGNATURE DE L'EPOUX, Peter Nussen

SIGNATURE DE L'EPOUSE, Madeleine Rozenfeld

Délivré le vingt huit Juillet mil neuf cent cinquante et un.

L'Officier de l'Etat civil,

Timbre et signature

Réservé aux mentions

M. C. 218

Adj. 1933 - 13e Lot - N° 14.517

PRÉFECTURE DU DEPARTEMENT DE LA SEINE

EXTRAIT des minutes des actes de Mariage

du _____ *Arrondissement de Paris*

vingt-huit juillet mil n

Bela NUSSEN

Budapest

dix juillet mil neuf ce

Peter NUSSEN

Julia KATZ

Madeleine ROZENFELD

Paris 18e

quatre janvier mil neu

Henri ROZENFELD

Rosalie LOVI

vingt-sept aout

cinquante-un

EPILOGUE: BELA'S DREAM

I had a dream not long ago that I would like to share with my dear ones, especially my grandchildren.

I dreamt about a very clear night sky, filled with stars. Suddenly a big fire appeared from my right side. A ball with fire burning in its lower path sped in a straight line across the sky, to the other side, to the left. I realized that I saw a tremendous eye, and the fireball penetrated the immense eye's corner, and I saw a tear drop fall.

What overwhelmed me was that the eye looked straight into my eyes in a very friendly manner to let me know that God has problems.

When I awoke the experience was still with me. It has not yet left me, nor will it ever, for so great was the dream's impact on me. After the tribulations of my younger years, I once again felt the message I had felt then, that God is near me.

Always I was intrigued and thinking of God in my younger years: perhaps He is moving and constantly experimenting, building different galaxies and different universes. He is like us humans, playing chess; except He is for millions of years, inventing and beginning with different experiments and compositions. Is this solely a form of vision and dreams? All that is up far away goes on by itself? No way. The last person to have seen actual form of Deity was Moses. God is with us: The God of the stars and planets, our God, Ruler of the universe. Wisdom and power and revealed in creation.

Now, at the threshold of the 21st century, with the closing of my own life cycle, I gladly declare that there is for sure an almighty God. Not only for this beautiful planet but also for the million and trillion universes and galaxies. I have listened and seen seminars given by astronomers, including ten video tapes of Carl Sagan of at least an hour and a half duration each. One segment included Ed Turner asking Carl Sagan if he believed in a God. Then came another very brilliant and well informed scholar named Lold Clark, and his seminar was called "Western Civilization." A third tape was on Egyptian civilization, and then came India, Iraq and China by Michael Wood.

After listening to these scientists I conclude that they really don't know anything about God.

The split between Philosophy, Religious Beliefs, Art and Science from the 17th Century up to the end of the 20th Century. The signs of coming together again, and the impact on the Health and Illness of society. How does man react to these changes?

God and Devil. Positive and Negative. Matter and Anti-Matter. Professor Einstein Matter $E=MC^2$. Energy (atom). All matters come from different particles. Cain and Abel. NASA can quickly and reliably transmit information from hundreds of millions of miles out in space. Earth magnetic field. Minus--Plus.

Amsterdam Spinoza 17th century 1650. Cosmologist Stephen Hawking says: "Technology won't be the only thing more advanced in the next millennium; people will be better too. Hawking's opinion.

About the recent discovery of antigravity; a mysterious force that might be causing the universe to expand at a constant accelerating rate.

Hawking 56, Lou Gherig disease which affects the motor skills and speech; by touching a computer screen that translates his words through an electronic synthesizer. All Matter and Anti-Matter explode.

Judaism doesn't believe in Pantheism (believes that God is in nature) as nature can be cruel and evil (floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, etc...) and doesn't endorse the belief "Peta" (people for ethical treatment of animals) has that man is an other creature of nature comparable to animals.

Some time back, millions of dollars were spent to save a whale while at the same time a boat carrying Vietnamese was allowed to sink in the sea of China with its cargo of human beings.

Judaism believes in the sanctity of life, human life that is.

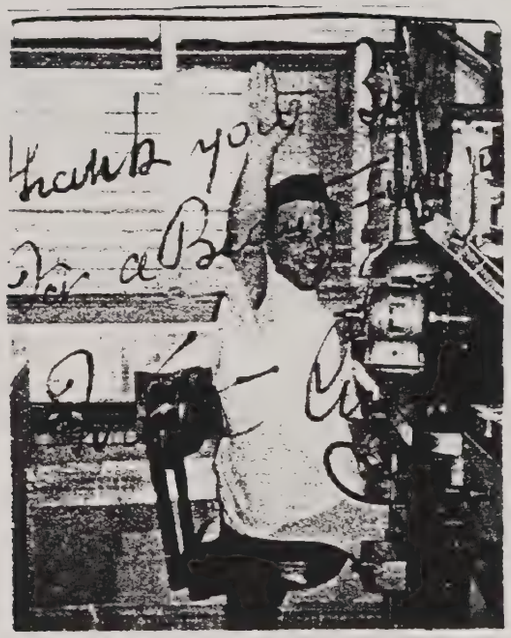
[26]And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth." [27]And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. [28]God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth."

ז וַיִּיצֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם עָפָר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו
נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה׃

And the children of Israel walked in the midst of the sea on dry land and the water formed a wall on the right end left of them. Ex. 14:22

It is discussed in the Midrash that there were differing groups among the Israelites, some of whom were ready to give up their lives in sanctification of God's name, such as Nachshon ben Aminadav and his followers, and some of whom were only willing to go into the sea conditioned on there being a miracle which would save them.

This being so, the one group actually walked onto the dry seabed with the mind set that they were walking into the midst of the water, with the feeling they were giving up their lives - it was all the same to them whether the water split open or not.



Thank you Bela.. for a beautiful job. Walter Cronkite.

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☐ BIOFORM		
☐ NEW HUE V.F.		
☐ NEW HUE		
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☐ PLASTIC ☐ LOWER

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PERSONAL SIGNATURE OF DENTIST

Mr William Nussen
144 Avenida Majorca # A
Laguna Beach, CA 92653-6721

Mr William Nussen
144 Avenida Majorca # A
Laguna Beach, CA 92653-6721

DESIGN CASE HERE

INSTRUCTIONS (Continued)

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Unilateral free-end removable partial without cross arch

The metal housings are easily processed into impression for duplicate processing model.

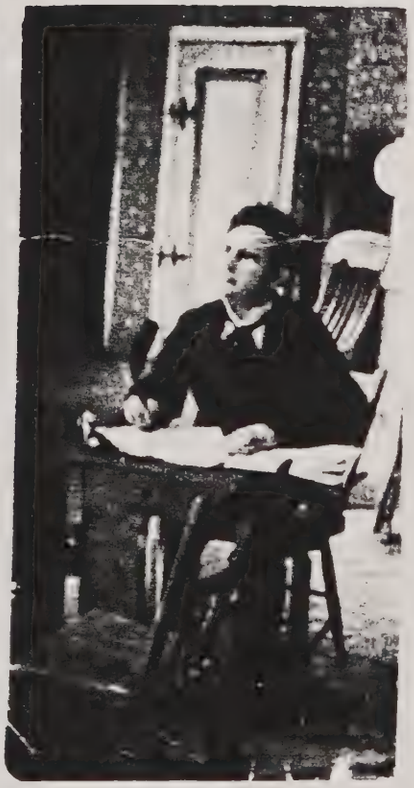
MALE ☐ FEMALE

VIGOROUS ☐ SOFT

Photo by Jol-Art Studios

TENOR WILLIAM B. NUSSEN
applies make-up for portrayal of Franz Schubert

Mary Nemec & William B. Nussen
1st Act "Blossom Time"



When World II broke out, Bill moved to Stockholm and went to work for the Tan Tekniska Laboratoriet, one of the most modern laboratories in the world with more than 100 technicians working at the bench.

Bill eventually opened his own laboratory in Stockholm, and it was also here that he resumed his singing career, appearing as the Cantor for High Holidays Services in Stockholm and Helsinki.

After marrying his lovely wife, Madeleine, a concert pianist, in Paris, Bill moved to the United States in 1951, settling in New York City.

The Nussens moved to Florida in 1959 and again Bill resumed his dual role as a laboratory technician and a concert soloist. In 1962 he served as Cantor and conducted summer services at Temple Israel in West Palm Beach. He was then persuaded by Opera Lyrica to accept the lead role of Franz Schubert in "Blossom Time."

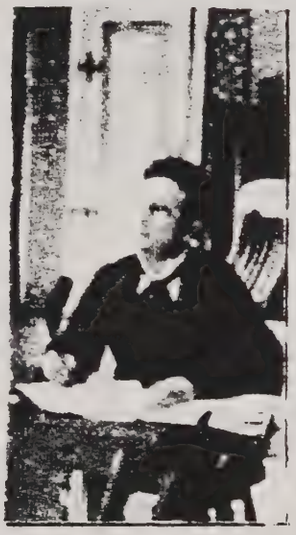
Bill's success in this role in which he is currently appearing is summed up by an excerpt from the drama section of a local newspaper: "William B. Nussen playing Schubert as 'looking as if he had just stepped out of a music history book.' "

Bill and his 11-year-old son, Sheldon, will appear in Menotti's Christmas opera, "Amahl and the Night Visitors," in Opera Lyrica's coming season. Sheldon will play the role of Amahl.

The Nussens also have two other children, Kenneth 8, and Joy, 1½ years old.

as Opera Star

William B. Nussen, C.D.T., prepares makeup for his role as Franz Schubert



The transition from the laboratory bench to the concert stage may seem quite a change of pace for most people. But William B. Nussen, C.D.T., of Palm Beach, Florida, finds the two roles not at all incompatible.

Bill's operatic career goes back many years to Hungary and the capitals of central Europe where he was acclaimed as the "wonder child." His beautiful tenor voice attracted full houses year after year; and in 1934, when he reached the peak of his fame, the newspapers wrote lavishly of his assured career as an international star.

Bill's career was cut short when, after a conflict with his parents, he ran away from home and became a dental laboratory apprentice in Budapest.

Cantor William Nussen

REQUEST FOR THE SERV THE HIGH HOLY DAYS

Name of Congregation CONGREGATION

Address 4350 OAK STREET VANCOUVER, B.C., V6H 2N4

Number and Street City State Zip Code

Telephone No. 604-731-4161 FAX 604-731-4989

(Area Code)

Is congregation affiliated with the United Synagogue? yes With Whom?

Name of Rabbi Wilfred Solomon Rabbinical Affiliation Rabbinical Assembly

Cantor Nussen has a magnificent voice and has a thorough knowledge of all the services. He is a traditional Hazan whose sincere renditions of the prayers often moves the congregation to tears.

What a difference you made for the Yamim Noraim and Sukkot! The power, range, control and quality of your voice is unbelievable. You gave such joy to our residents. Your Nusach was fantastic; you provided plenty of opportunity for congregational singing.

Again, I wish to tell you how magnificent Cantor William Nussen was for the Yamim Noraim and Sukkot.

were so delighted to have a truly great Chazzan for the Fall Holy Days. What a voice! Cantor Nussen also encouraged plenty of congregational participation. His knowledge of the liturgy is very complete!

There is no question! We were very fortunate and blessed this year. We are very grateful to Cantor Nussen.

שלום וברכה

Rabbi Louis J. Feldman

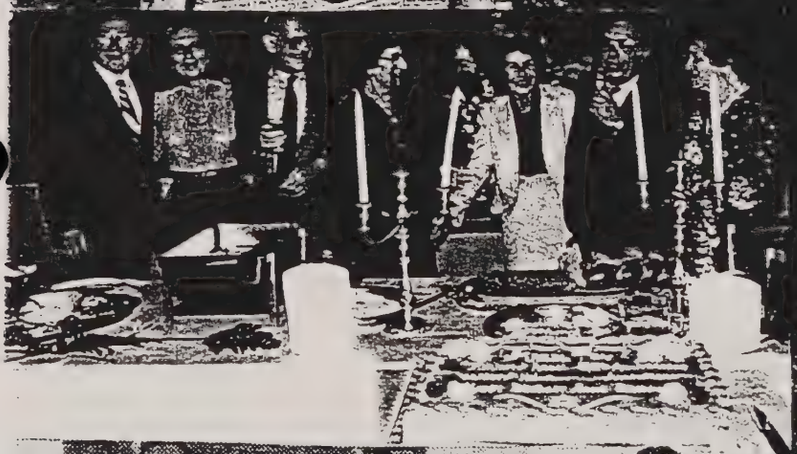
Rabbi Louis J. Feldman

WITH Rabbi Bornstein

Cantor William B. Nussen

During the month of July, members of B'nai Tikvah Congregation 5820 W. Man-

Rabbi and Cantor celebrate



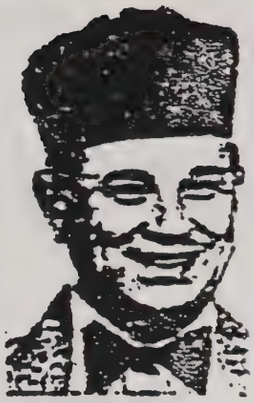
CANTOR WILLIAM NUSSEN — He will headline an evening of musical entertainment when B'nai Tikvah Congregation holds its third annual concert at the synagogue, 5820 W. Manchester Ave., Saturday, Jan. 29, 7:45 p.m. Joining the cantor will be Cantors Nathan Lam and Samuel Fordis, along with entertainers Herschel and Judy Fox. For information call

CANTOR NATHAN LAM

B'nai Tikvah Congregation, presents

Hazzan William B. Nussen's

3rd Annual Concert



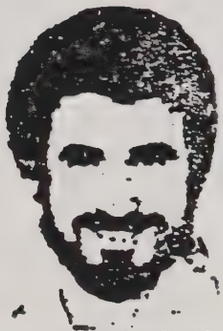
Cantor William B. Nussen

7:45 p.m. Saturday January, 29, 1983

A magnificent evening of Music

CANTOR DAVID J. KANE

ACCOMPANISTS:



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NTOR SAMUEL FORCH

& JUDY FOX

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1. Una Fortiva Lagrima
   Aria from the Opera: L'Elisir d'Amore . . . . . G. Donizetti (1797-1848)
2. Hob Ich Mir a Mantl . . . . . Neumann arr.
3. Fun Kosev Biz Kitev . . . . . Belarsky arr.
4. Zoll Shoin Kumen di Guele . . . . . Belarsky
5. Shluf Mayn Kind
6. Flower Song
   a from the Opera: Carmen . . . . . Bizet
   t Pourri: Jewish Folk Songs . . . . . Cantor Nussen arr.
3. A Chasen'dl Oif Shabos . . . . . Low arr.
). Achtisik er un Zibetsik Zi. (Jewish Folk Song)

B'nai Tikvah Congregation

RABBI MARVIN BORNSTEIN
CANTOR WILLIAM B. NUSSEN

December, 1982

Hear Ye! — Hear Ye!

ANNUAL CANTOR'S CONCERT

29, 1983

This year we wo like to celebrate Hanukkah in a differe way – with a concert featuring our own Cantor William B. Nussen, and accompanying artists: Cantor Baruch Cohon of Temple Emanuel, Beverly Hills; Cantor Samuel Fordis of Valley Beth Shalom, Encino; Cantor Yehuda Keller of Temple Beth Zion-Sinai, Lakewood, and mberg, an operatic soprano who is well-versed in opera, ra, and Jewish music.

B'nai Tikvah

anor Wm. B. Nussen

Tikvah Congrega- 820 W. Manchester e., Westchester, is pre- ring for the High Holy ys which begin on the ning of September 10, l ends at sundown on

CANTOR WILLIAM NUSSEN TO *DAVEN* TRADITIONAL SERVICES

Cantor William Nussen of Long Beach will act as Hazan for our traditional High Holy Day Services
Cantor Nussen was a child prodigy in Hungary and received his early education in the Yeshiva of Satu Mare, the seat of what was to become Satmar Hassidism. He has served as a Cantor in synagogues in Stockholm, Helsinki and more recently in Los Angeles. His musical training included conservatories in Vienna and Paris. Cantor Nussen's career has been enhanced by operatic performances throughout Europe and the Southland. He is, along with his wife Madeline, a survivor of the Holocaust. We take great pride in welcoming Cantor and Mrs. Nussen to our Temple Family for the High Holy Days.

Cantor William B. Nussen, newly associated with B'nai Tikvah, will chant the age-old and beautiful meoldies of the holiday. Cantor Nussen was born in Hungary and educated in the largest European Hassidic school. His beautiful tenor voice has won him acclaim on the stage as well as the pulpit, in many European cities, as well as New York and Florida, where he has appeared in concert. He served as cantor in Stockholm, Helsinki, New York, West Palm Beach and Long Beach before joining

Temple Immanuel, Beverly Hills

HAZZAN SAMUEL FORDIS . . . . . Violinist
Emeritus, Valley Beth Shalom

HAZZAN YEHUDA KELLER . . . . Baritone
Temple Sinai Zion, Lakewood

BECKY SOMBERG . . . . . Operatic Soprano

ACCOMPANISTS: Madeleine Nussen
Ludwig Dreyfuss

Saturday, December 19, 1981, at 8:00 p

PRESENTS

cantor

WILLIAM B. NUSSEN'S

CONCERT

STARRING

CANTOR YEHUDA KELLER

DAVID MYRVOLD

SHIRLEY SIEGEL

Accompanists: MADELEINE NUSSEN
PERRY WERT

7:45 p.m SATURDAY, MARCH 28th

B'nai Tikvah Congregation,

MASTER OF CEREMONIES . . . . RENOWNED COMPOSER MICHAEL ISAACSON

STARRING

HAZZAN WILLIAM B. NUSSEN . . . Tenor

B'nai Tikvah Congregation
presents
Hazzan William B. Nussen's
Hanukkah Concert

MASTER OF CEREMONIES . . . . RENOWNED COMPOSER MICHAEL ISAACSON

STARRING

HAZZAN WILLIAM B. NUSSEN . . . Tenor
B'nai Tikvah Congregation
HAZZAN BARUCH COHON . . . . . Baritone
Temple Immanuel, Beverly Hills
HAZZAN SAMUEL FORDIS . . . . . Violinist
Emeritus, Valley Beth Shalom
HAZZAN YEHUDA KELLER . . . . Baritone
Temple Sinai Zion, Lakewood
BECKY SOMBERG . . . . . Operatic Soprano

ACCOMPANISTS: Madeleine Nussen
Ludwig Dreyfuss

Saturday, December 19, 1981, at 8:00 pm

- -

Tear off and mail to: B'NAI TIKVAH CONGREGATION
5820 W. Manchester Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90045

PRICES: SPONSORS $12.50 GENERAL ADMISSION $5.00 prepaid
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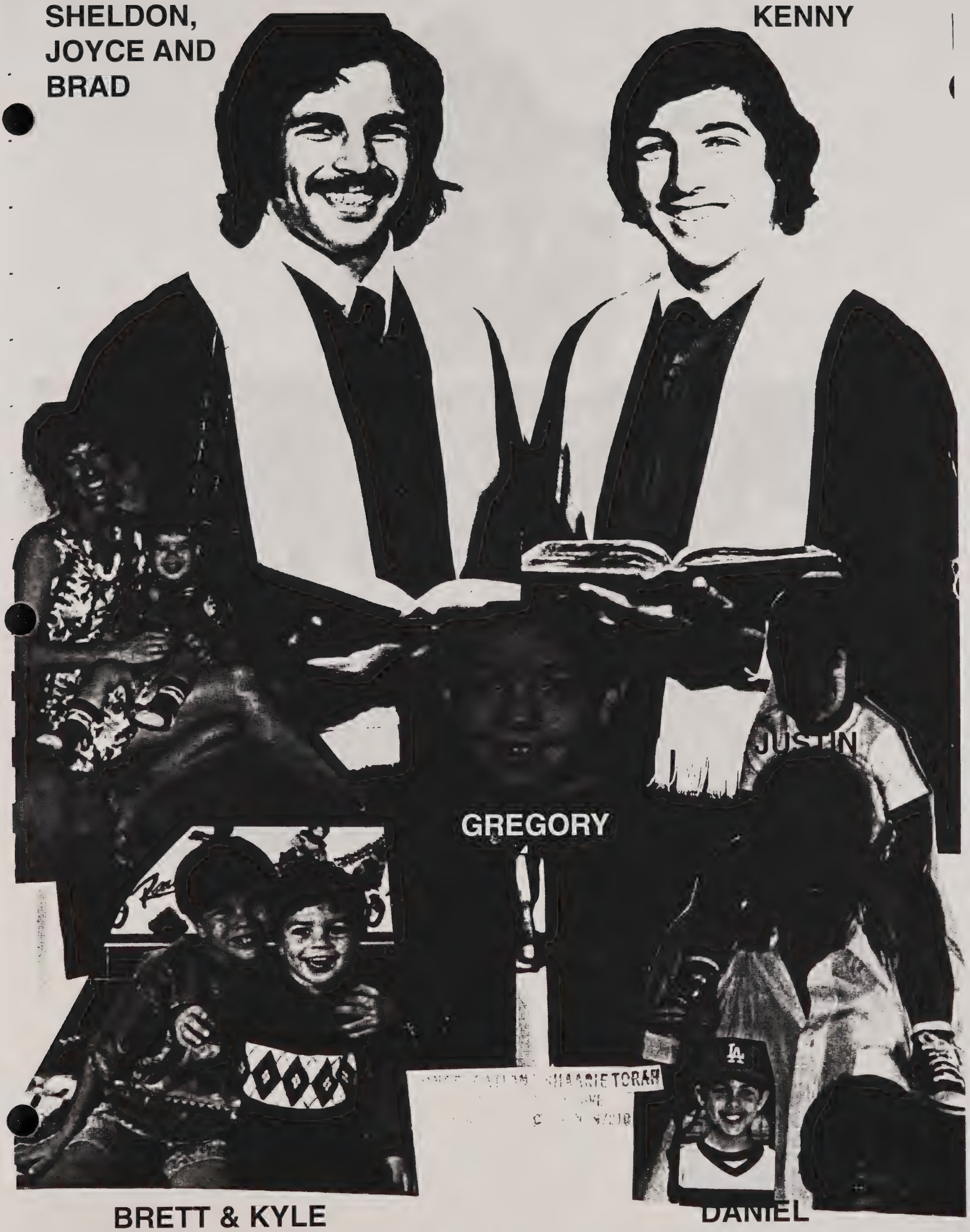
Check enclosed in the amount of $ _____ ☐ Sponsor ☐ General Admission

Please send in your reservation for SPONSOR as soon as possible so that the printer can include your name on the program.

Doors will open at 7:15 p.m. (for tickets at the door). Please COME EARLY to avoid a last minute rush - and allow for PARKING!

For further information please call the Temple Office . . . 645-6262
or Madeleine Nussen 427-5503


SHELDON, JOYCE AND BRAD
KENNY
JUSTIN
GREGORY
BRETT & KYLE
DANIEL

JIM
&
JOY

JHA
JEWISH HOME FOR THE AGING

30 Kislev 5758
December 29, 1997

Cantor William Nussen
144-A Avenida Majorca
Laguna Hills, CA 92653

Dear Cantor Nussen,

As I have a few moments to reflect on the fall Holy Days, your unbelievable Chazzanut is on my mind. I have not forgotten the tremendous contribution you made to the Yamin Tovim. Not only our residents, but Jews in the community who cannot afford rent and groceries, much less synagogue membership, had the treat of a "world-class" chazzan on the Holy Days.

With all of my heart, I thank you and look forward to having you daven with us during Pesach.

All my best,

Rabbi Louis J. Feldman

Rabbi Louis J. Feldman

Lancell Village
7150 Tampa Avenue
Reseda, CA 91335
(818) 774-3000
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The world rejoiced when you were born,
To your parents came a new son,
The charm, the warmth you emanate
The voice, the look, the laugh are great...
For thirty years I was not there...
But for Forty we were everywhere...
You have touched many humans life
Friends, family, your children and wife.
I do not know from where you take your strength,
The courage, the imagination, the persistance
to achieve, conquer, persuade and win
But I am surely glad that I am your kin
The one who by your side day and night
Have seen you do everything come out right--
The "Cosmos" must smile to-day
To see you celebrate this day
And everyone who loves you so much
Hope and pray that you will not wish
the years still ahead of you
Because surely we all love you
You have made a difference in our life
Oh! I am so happy to be your wife
To see your face every day,
Rain or shine come what may,
I Love you + pray for your safety
Good Health happy life surrounded by
your children & the little ones -- Madeleine

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JHA
JEWISH HOME FOR THE AGING

1 Iyar 5758
June 27, 1998

Cantor William Nussen
144-A Avenida Majorca
Laguna Hills, CA 92653

Dear Cantor Nussen:

Once again you dazzled us with your spectacular chazzanut! It was wonderful to have you and Mrs. Nussen with us for Pesach. Enclosed is your honorarium, which you so richly deserve. A number of visitors remarked "That is quite a chazzan you have here!" They are right!

We look forward to having you with us for Shavuot. Your contract will be in the mail shortly.

All my best,

Rabbi Louis J. Feldman

Rabbi Louis J. Feldman

Grancell Village
7150 Tampa Avenue
Reseda, CA 91335
(818) 774-3000
FAX (818) 774-3020